BATSFORD CHESS

Gary Lane

The Scotch Game Explained

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BATSFORD

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A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK

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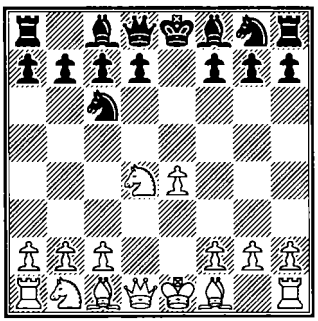
To Andrew Osborne

With thanks to François Mertens for his help in providing inspiration for this book

Introduction

The Scotch is an old opening which has been revived and revitalised with modern ideas to make it a reliable system with opportunities for attack.

The Scotch occurs after the moves **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4**



History

Though first mentioned by Del Rio in 1750, it was the Scottish player John Cochrane (1798-1878) who made the opening popular after recommending that the London Chess Club play it against Edinburgh in a major correspondence match which took place from 1824-28. Thereafter it was immediately recognised as an effective opening weapon – indeed the Edinburgh players also employed it in the match and their success is the reason for its current name! In the intervening years it has fluctuated in popularity but the 1960s saw Radulov, Savon and Kupreichik successfully resurrect the relatively forgotten system. This was followed in the 1970s and 1980s by Dutch players Van der Wiel and Timman promoting the opening and giving it quite a decent reputation. However it was the great Garry Kasparov who gave the Scotch its biggest boost when in the 1990s he used it in three world championship matches and inspired a whole new generation to follow his example. Indeed when Kasparov first sprung his surprise weapon on Karpov at Lyon 1990 it was nothing short of a sensation. Armed with his fantastic analytical skills it seemed that the world champion could unleash forgotten, almost historical, lines at will – and still gain dynamic attacking chances. Thanks to Kasparov's example, the Scotch is today established as a formidable opening, attracting the attention of even the world's leading players.

How the Games Were Selected

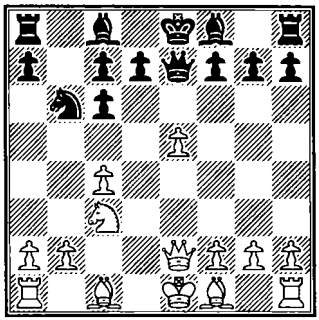
Originally I intended to update my 1993 book *Winning with the Scotch* but I soon realised that merely adding new references was not a practical solution as the subsequent huge turnover of ideas demanded a compete overhaul of the book. And this was not the only problem. I also discovered that I did not have the earlier manuscript in a usuable electronic format because it was done on an Amstrad Word Processor which had long been thrown out! I therefore set about writing a completely new book which would give lots of ideas to newcomers to the opening as well as club players eager to expand their repertoire.

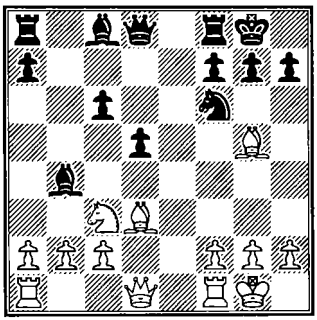
What to Play

My objective is to provide readers with a range of ideas to suit all kinds of playing styles. For instance, in the game Radjabov-Karjakin, Dos Hermanas 2005, we see the popular Mieses Variation which occurs after **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d8 8 c4 ♘b6** – and now **9 ♘c3** is my recommendation.

I think bringing the knight to c3 is a decent way to pursue the advantage. It also has the merit of being easier to remember because it is more logical than some of the other complicated lines. Radjabov is one of the world's top players so it certainly reflects the latest fashion. If a potential opponent tries to look up a possible retort he will have no luck in the standard reference books such as *Nunn's Chess Openings* because it is not even mentioned! Maybe someone will do better by looking it up in the latest edition of *Modern Chess Openings* but even there it is considered a side-line with only a brief mention.

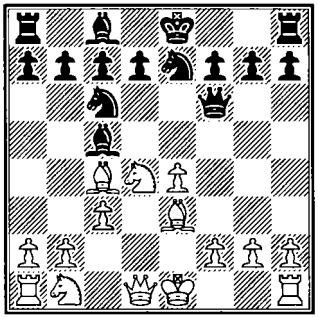
I have tried to provide alternatives for the White player who has no wish to enter sharp lines. This is the reason why the Scotch Four Knights is given in detail so that one can choose a line with a few tricks in the opening but with the main contest actually taking place in the middlegame. This variation has been neglected in some sources but continues to attract some of the brightest stars in chess such as the 2005 USA Champion Hikaru Nakamura. In this position from a game against Karjakin in Cuernavaca 2004





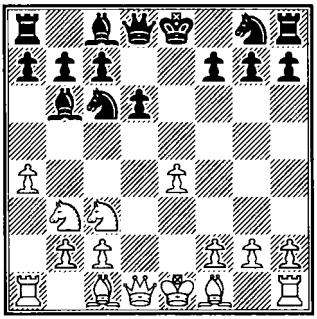
White tried 11 ♘a4!? which is a relatively new idea and it eventually brought him success.

The lines with 4...♗c5 are popular so I have looked at three alternatives for White.



Now this might be a familiar sight for some who follow the Classical Variation occurring after **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4** and indeed it leads to some interesting tactics. However, White can also play a solid variation with scope for an attack by continuing 5 ♘b3, as for example in Zhang Pengxiang – Moradiabadi, Dubai 2005:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 a4



The idea is to threaten the bishop with a4-a5 and if in reply he creates an escape square by a7-a6 then ♘d5 will force a retreat unless Black wants to play the rest of the game with a buckled pawn structure.

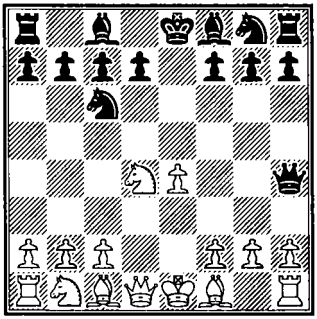
7...a6 8 ♘d5 ♗a7 9 ♕f3!?

Another example illustrating how the Scotch can appeal to all tastes – from those who want the opening to be critical to players who prefer to postpone the battle for supremacy until the middlegame.

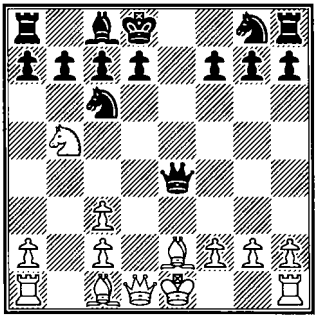
If you want a more positional repertoire then I would suggest 5 ♘b3 against 4....♗c5 and the Scotch Four Knights against 4....♘f6.

There are bound to be opponents who will want to avoid your opening and try something different and I have made an effort to cover these offbeat replies because in my experience weekend tournament players like to try their luck with unusual ideas. Perhaps one that has more credibility than most is the Steinitz:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4



I used to play this line as Black so I know what is wrong with it! Basically, White has to accept that he will lose the e-pawn but in return he will gain an advantage in development and a strong initiative. The critical position arises upon **5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗e2 ♕xe4 7 ♘db5 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♔d8**



Black is obliged to move his king, thus forfeiting the right to castle. Frankly, the number of miniatures won by White makes this an exciting way to pick up an easy point.

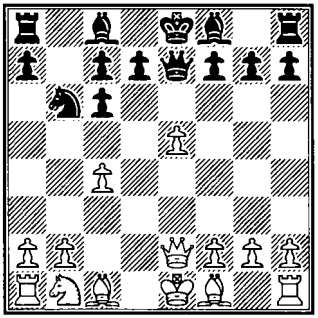
In the *Other Black Defences* chapter I point out that the beginner's move 4....♘xd4 can in fact transpose to a line favoured by the Bosnian Grandmaster Ivan Sokolov, whereas 4...g6 transposes into a Pirc Defence against which I suggest the aggressive 150 Attack. I also have taken time to discuss the timid 3...d6 which is often played by aspiring players.

Conclusion

The Scotch is well suited to the kind of player who seeks a forcing type of game with ambitions of attack. I have endeavoured to provide a repertoire for White that requires low maintenance and can be learned in a weekend. The Scotch does have some heavily analysed variations and while I have mentioned them, the emphasis remains on systems that are easy to play and will allow White to emerge from the opening with promising prospects.

Mieses Variation: 8...♘b6

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6



History

The Mieses Variation is so called in honour of Jacques Mieses (1865-1954) a strong German master renowned for his attacking style. It is a recurring theme that openings are named not so much after their inventor but after their most famous practitioner and promoter. Such is the case here: Eugen von Schmidt of Moscow first wrote about the line in *Schachzeitung* in 1865 and it became so well known that it was recommended by Steinitz in his 1889 classic *Modern Chess Instructor*. But a few years later at the famous Hastings international tournament of 1895 Mieses played the line four times and it was his name that stuck. Since then it has had a steady following, being regarded as one of the sharper lines available to White. In the 1970s it enjoyed a surge of popularity with Sax and Sveshnikov among its enthusiastic adherents which in turn helped to attract the attention of world class players such as Timman and Ljubojevic who used it as a surprise weapon. In the 1990s it became a familiar sight on the international tournament scene with Dutch grandmaster Van der Wiel regularly employing it with success. Then of course Kasparov's use of the opening transformed its reputation so imitators were queuing up to give it a go. Nowadays it maintains its strong reputation for forcing Black to enter perilous variations where accurate defence is essential.

Basic Plan for White

White tends to dictate matters in the opening by playing 5 ♘xc6 to facilitate the pawn advance e4-e5 harassing the king's knight. The assumption is that Black will be obliged to enter the main line because early alternatives leave him with an inferior position. Therefore the main crossroads comes after

8...♘b6 after which White has various choices at his disposal. I have selected 9 ♘c3 because I think it is good, easy to learn and currently played by some of the best attacking players in the world.

Basic Plan for Black

This sharp line has to be treated with respect and with due knowledge of the standard continuations so as to avoid an early calamity. The big test comes at move 8, whether to play ...♘b6 or ...♗a6 – with the latter being examined in the next chapter. Black will have to contend with positions where the complications are difficult to unravel over the board and where things are easier for White who tends to obtain a standard space advantage from the opening.

Radjabov – Karjakin
Dos Hermanas 2005

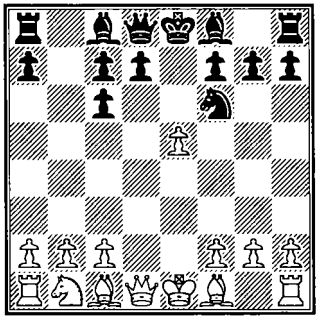
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6

The starting point of the Mieses Variation.

5....bxc6

I can honestly say I have never seen anyone at a tournament who has played 5....dxc6, allowing a poor ending, but after consulting some old books I discovered that it has occurred a few times so it always best to be prepared. For instance: 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♘c3 ♗b4 8 ♗d2 ♖e8 9 0-0-0! ♔e7 (9...♘xe4?? allows 10 ♗g5 mate) 10 ♗d3 with the better chances.

6 e5



6...♕e7

The idea of pinning the e-pawn has now been accepted as the best policy so as to prevent White from dictating play in the opening. Other moves make it easy for White to develop:

a) 6...♘d5 7 c4 and now:

a1) 7...♘b6 8 ♗d3 ♗a6 9 ♘d2 d5 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♕e2+ ♕e7 12 b3 ♕xe2+ 13 ♔xe2 gave White a slight edge because Black's queenside pieces lack mobility, Lane-Wein, Brussels rapidplay 1999.

a2) 7...♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9 ♕xd2 ♘b6 10 ♘c3 ♕e7 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 f4 a5 13 ♕f2 with good kingside attacking chances, Wells-Estrada Nieto, Koszeg 2000.

b) 6...♘e4 7 ♕f3 ♘g5 8 ♕g3 ♘e6 9 ♗d3 d6 10 0-0 when White's better development gives him the superior chances, S.Lalic-Westerkamp, Guernsey 2001.

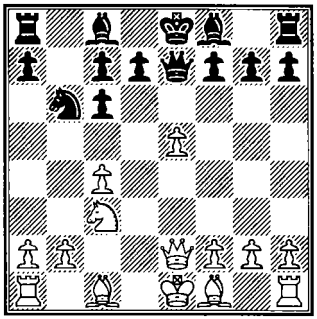
7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4

White chases the centralised knight.

8...♘b6

The main alternative 8...♗a6 is examined in the next chapter.

9 ♘c3

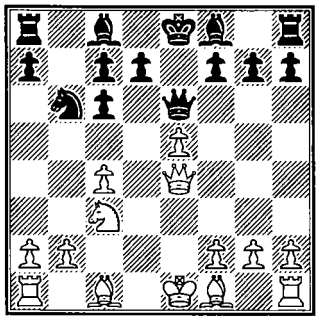


I have discussed this position in the introduction but at the risk of repeating myself I think that bringing the knight to c3 is a good way to contest Black's strategy. It also has the merit of being easier to remember because it is more logical than some of the other complicated lines. An opponent might do some research by looking up a possible reply in standard reference books such as *Nunn's Chess Openings* but it will be to no avail as it is not even mentioned there! Perhaps someone will do better by looking it up in the latest edition of *Modern Chess Openings* but it is referred to only briefly. 9 ♘d2 and 9 b3 are the main alternatives.

9....♕e6

The queen attacks the c4 pawn and makes room for the development of the dark-squared bishop. Another popular continuation is 9...♗a6 when 10 ♕e4 (10 b3 0-0-0 11 ♗b2 g6 12 0-0-0 ♗g7 13 f4 ♖he8 14 ♕f2 ♗b7 15 c5 gave White all the chances in A.Osborne-Wilcox, Paignton 1987) 10...♕e6 transposes to the main game. Black can try to be independent with 10...0-0-0? but then 11 c5! gives White the advantage. For instance: 11...♗xf1 12 cxb6 ♗a6 13 bxa7 ♔b7 14 ♗e3 (the pawn is preserved on the seventh rank maintaining White's better position) 14...d5 15 exd6 ♕xd6 16 ♖d1 ♗d3 17 ♕a4 ♕g6 18 ♘e2 ♕d6 19 0-0 ♗e7 20 a8=♕+ 1-0 Namyslo-Metaxasz, Budapest 2002.

10 ♕e4

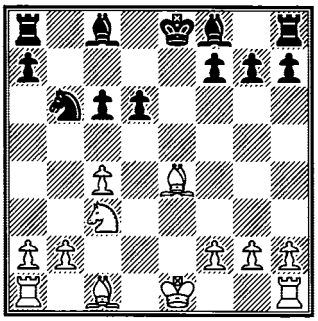


10...♗a6

Black continues to apply pressure on the c4 pawn. 10...g6 is examined in the next game. The idea of 10...♗b4 to pin the knight has to be respected because it gets another piece into the game but it should be harmless: 11 ♗d2 ♗xc3 (11...♗b7 12 ♗d3 0-0-0 13 0-0-0 ♗xc3

14 ♗xc3 ♘a4 15 ♗a5 ♘c5 16 ♕f4 ♘xd3+ 17 ♖xd3 c5 18 f3 with roughly equal chances, Lastin-Zakharov,Novgorod 1999) 12 ♗xc3 d5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♕b4 ♘d7 15 ♗b5 ♗a6 (15...c6 should be considered when 16 ♗a4 offers equal opportunities) 16 ♗a4 0-0-0 17 0-0-0 ♘xe5 18 ♕d4 is better for White because he is threatening the a7 pawn and the knight.

Black can try 10...d5 which volunteers to enter a slightly inferior ending: 11 exd6 cxd6 12 ♗d3 ♕xe4+ (12...♗a6 13 ♗e3 ♕xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♖c8 15 c5! dxc5 16 0-0-0 gave White the better chances in Sutovsky-Van den Doel, Plovdiv 2003) 12...♕xe4+ 13 ♗xe4

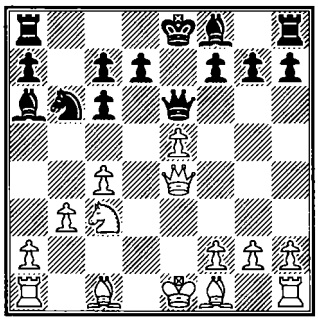


And now:

a) 13...♗d7 14 b3 0-0-0 15 0-0 ♗e7 16 ♗e3 ♖he8 17 ♖ac1 ♔c7 18 ♖fd1 ♗f6 19 ♗f3 ♗f5 when instead of 20 a4 as played in Rublevsky-Kunte, Bled Olympiad 2002, 20 c5! manages to exploit the power of the bishops: 20...dxc5 (20...♘c8 21 cxd6+ ♘xd6 22 ♘d5+ ♔b7 23 ♘xf6 wins due to the threat against the c6 pawn) 21 ♘b5+ cxb5 22 ♖xc5+ ♔b8 23 ♗f4+ winning.

b) 13...♗b7 14 b3 g6 15 ♗b2 ♗g7 16 0-0-0 0-0-0 17 ♗f3 and White has the better pawn structure but chances should still be level, Pavasovic-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

11 b3



11...♗b4

Now that the b-pawn has moved Black finds time to attack the knight.

Also possible: 11...0-0-0 12 ♗b2 ♗b7 13 0-0-0 ♖e8 14 f4 d5 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♕c2 ♔b8! (a careful move designed to safeguard the a7 pawn and avoid tactics based on ♘b5 but not on the other hand 16...♕h6 17 g3!? ♖xe5 when 18 ♘b5 ♖e7 19 ♗e5 gives White an excellent attack) 17 ♔b1 g6 18 ♗e2 c5 19 ♗f3 ♗e7 20 g4, preparing to play f4-f5, gave White the edge in Kasparov-Adams, Internet 2000.

12 ♗d2 ♗xc3

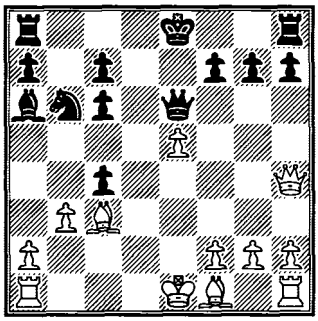
The idea of the exchange is to enable Black to safely play ...d7-d5. Instead 12...d5 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xa6 ♗xc3 15 ♗xc3 ♘xc3

16 ♕d4 ♘d5 17 0-0 is better for White due to Black's weak doubled c-pawns.

13 ♗xc3 d5 14 ♕h4

Played by Kasparov in 1999 and a move that has stood the test of time.

14...dxc4



15 ♖c1!

There is no need to worry about the pawn on c4 because it is pinned so White has time to adjust his pieces accordingly. 15 ♗e2 ♘d5 and now:

a) 16 ♗d4 c5 (16...♕f5! is very good because the threat of ...♘f4 gives Black the initiative: 17 0-0 ♘f4 18 ♗f3 (18 ♗xc4? ♗xc4 19 bxc4 ♕e4 wins thanks to the threat of mate on g2 and ...♘e2+) 18...0-0 19 ♖fd1? cxb3 led to the superior position in Morozevich-Piket, Internet 2000) 17 ♗xc5 ♘c3 18 ♗xc4 ♕xe5+ 19 ♗e3 ♘e4 20 0-0 ♗xc4 21 bxc4 0-0 22 ♖fe1 with a slight edge, Kasparov-Adams, Sarajevo 1999.

b) 16 ♗xc4 g5! 17 ♕d4 (17 ♕xg5?? fails to ♗xc4) 17...♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♘f4 (18...0-0-0 is best met by 19 ♗d4! with the better chances) 19 ♕xe6+ ♘xe6 20 0-0-0! ♔e7 21 ♖he1 ♖hd8 22 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♖e4 ♖d5 24 ♔c2 c5 25 ♖a4 ♘d4+ 26 ♗xd4 cxd4 27 ♖xa7 ♔d7 28 ♔d3 with the better rook and pawn ending, Kasparov-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

15..0-0 16 ♗e2 ♘d5

Black would like to take the bishop on c3 so as to eliminate the defence of the e5 pawn. Instead Macieja-Korchnoi, Mallorca Olympiad 2004, saw 16...♘d7 to put pressure on the e5 pawn but White simply carried on developing: 17 0-0 ♘xe5 18 ♖fe1 f6 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 22 ♖xc4 with all the chances.

17 ♗a1 ♘b4 18 bxc4 ♖ad8

Or 18...♘xa2 19 ♖b1 ♖ab8 20 0-0 with a double-edged position.

19 0-0 ♘d3

If 19...♘xa2 then 20 ♖cd1 ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 ♘b4 22 ♖d8 with decent attacking chances.

20 ♖c3 ♘xe5 21 ♖e3 ♘g6

An attempt to support the knight by 21...f6 makes little impression upon 22 f4 ♘g6 23 ♖xe6 (23 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 24 ♖xe6 also looks good) 23...♘xh4 24 ♖xc6 ♗b7 25 ♖xc7 ♗xg2 26 ♖d1 when the ending is better for White.

22 ♕g5 ♕d7 23 h4

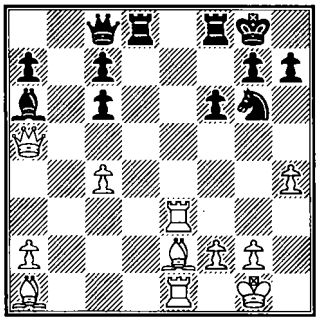
White cannot resist increasing the attack by trying to push the knight

out of the way. Instead 23 ♕a5 is certainly good when the passive 23...♕c8 might help Black to hang on to the a-pawn but 24 ♗d3 still leaves White with influential bishops.

23...f6 24 ♕a5 ♕c8 25 ♖g3 ♕e6

Or 25...♘xh4 26 ♗g4 f5 27 ♗h5 when the pressure on the g7 pawn gives Black problems.

26 ♖e3 ♕c8 27 ♖e1



27...♘xh4?

A risky venture allowing the h-file to be opened for the benefit of White's rook. Maybe 27...c5 is necessary so that 28 ♕xc5 ♗b7 at least gets the bishop into the action, although White is still on top.

28 ♖h3 ♘g6

28...♘f5 29 ♖a3 ♗b7 30 ♗g4 g6 31 ♖g3 gives White great attacking chances.

29 ♕h5

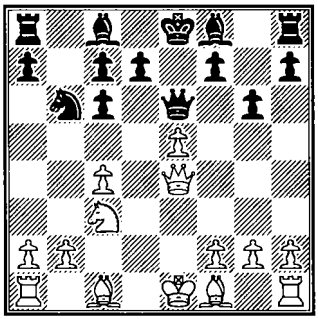
The addition of the queen on the h-file seals Black's fate because 29...h6 is of course inadequate due to 30 ♕xg6.

29...♕e6 30 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 31 ♖g3 1-0

In the next encounter Black follows the same system but provides an alternative idea with 10...g6.

Rublevsky – Lautier
Poikovsky 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♘c3 ♕e6 10 ♕e4 g6



Black wants to undermine the e5 pawn by means of a kingside fianchetto.

11 ♗d3

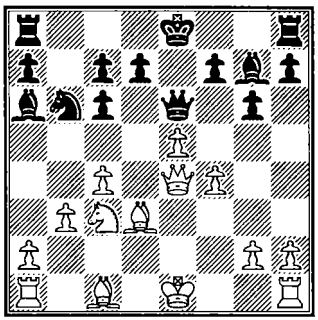
The bishop supports the queen and prepares to castle kingside. It is also possible to support the e-pawn by 11 f4. For example: 11...♗a6 (or 11...d5 12 exd6 cxd6 13 ♗e3 ♗g7 14 0-0-0 is level) 12 b3 ♗g7 13 ♗b2 0-0 14 0-0-0 f6 15 c5! (White pushes the knight back

granting himself a space advantage) 15...♗xf1 16 ♖hxf1 ♘c8 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♕xe6+ dxe6 19 ♖fe1 ♘e7 20 ♖xe6 gave White a winning advantage in Dworakowska-Greenfeld, Coventry 2005.

11...♗a6

The game Antal-Estrada Nieto, Hungarian Team Championship 2003 saw 11...♗g7 when play proceeded 12 f4 d5 13 exd6 cxd6 14 0-0 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♕xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♗b7 17 c5 dxc5 18 f5 (18 ♗a3 0-0-0 19 ♗xc5 with roughly equal chances) 18...0-0-0 19 fxg6 fxg6 20 ♗g5 ♖de8 21 ♗f3 h5 22 a4 with the initiative.

12 b3 ♗g7 13 f4



13...0-0

Black completes his development – having his king removed from the centre makes it easier to safely prepare ...d7-d5. Instead 13...d5?! is not as accurate: 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♕a4+ (16 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 17 ♕xd5 ♖d8 18 ♕c5 is also promising) 16...♕d7 17 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 18 ♗xa6 ♘b4 19 ♗b7 ♘c2+ 20 ♔e2 ♖ab8 21 ♖d1+ ♔e7 22 ♗f3 ♖hd8 (22....♘xa1 23 ♗a3+ ♔e6 24 ♗g4+ f5 25 exf6+ ♔xf6 26 ♖d7 wins) 23 ♖b1 led to the better position, David-Brochet, Evry 2003.

14 ♗a3

The idea is to oblige Black to move the rook so White can respond accordingly.

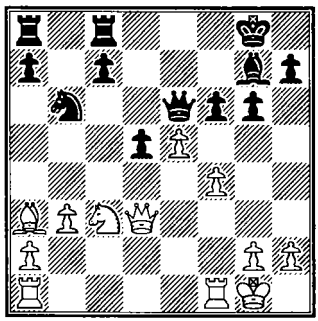
14...♖fc8!?

This is what I call thinking ahead even if it does look daft. Black intends to play ...d7-d5 and wants to have the rook on c8 to protect his pawn after central exchanges. It seems that 14...♖fe8 is the logical choice although admittedly the line 15 0-0 d5 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 ♕e2 ♗xd3 18 ♕xd3 f6 19 ♘b5 ♕d7 20 ♖ac1 does show why protection is needed for the c-pawn in order to avoid certain tactics.

15 0-0 d5 16 cxd5 cxd5

Black's rook on c8 will support any future c7-c5 advance.

17 ♕f3 ♗xd3 18 ♕xd3 f6



19 f5!?

A clever way to try and unsettle Black by offering a temporary pawn sacrifice.

Other ideas:

a) 19 exf6?! ♕xf6 20 ♘e2 c5 21 f5 c4 22 ♕h3 gxf5! (22....♕xa1 23 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♕e6+ ♔g7 26 ♘f4 ♗f6 27 ♗e7 favours White) 23 ♖ae1 ♖e8 favours Black.

b) 19 ♖ad1 fxe5 20 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 21 ♕xd5+ ♘xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♖d8 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗b2 with a likely draw.

19...gxf5 20 exf6 ♕xf6 21 ♘e2

Not 21 ♘xd5? because of 21...♕d4+ and Black wins.

21...c5

Instead 21...♕xa1 22 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 might win two rooks for a queen but 23 ♗c5 ensures a double-edged game where White has decent attacking prospects because the black king is exposed.

22 ♕f3 c4 23 ♘g3

23 ♖ad1 is worth investigating.

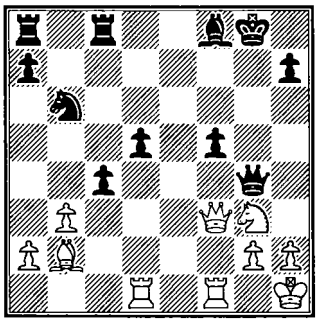
23...♕d4+

23...♕c3?! 24 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 25 ♖ad1 is roughly level.

24 ♔h1 ♕g4 25 ♖ad1 ♗f8?

In a difficult position Black goes astray in his bid to carry out a favourable exchange of the dark-squared bishops. After 25...♕xf3?! 26 ♖xf3 c3 27 ♘xf5 White is fine thanks to his attacking prospects. The best line is 25...cxb3 26 axb3 ♖c3 27 ♕xf5 ♕xf5 28 ♘xf5 ♖xb3 29 ♘xg7 ♖xa3 leaving White struggling to draw.

26 ♗b2



26...♗g7

Black tries again to exchange pieces to reduce White's dominance of the a1-h8 diagonal but the difference is that the king is poorly placed on g7. Alternatively 26...♕xf3 27 ♖xf3 ♗b4 28 ♗d4 c3 29 ♘xf5 leaves White with the better position.

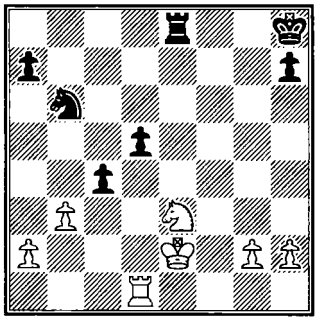
27 ♗xg7 ♕xf3 28 ♖xf3 ♔xg7 29 ♘xf5+ ♔h8 30 ♔g1

As usual for the ending the king is brought into the centre. By contrast Black's king must remain in the corner to avoid an attack – Lautier is in trouble!

30...♖f8 31 ♔f2 ♖ae8 32 ♘e3 ♖xf3+ 33 ♔xf3 ♖f8+?!

A time-trouble move just to avoid making a decision. A better idea is to seek exchanges with 33...cxb3 when 34 axb3 ♖b8 leaves White still having a lot to do to secure a win.

34 ♔e2 ♖e8?!



35 ♖d4!

White blocks the position and can move his king to a better square.

35....♔g7 36 ♔d2 cxb3 37 axb3 h5?!

Black should seek exchanges by 37...a5.

38 ♔d3 ♖e5 39 ♖f4 ♖e8 40 ♔d4 ♔g6

After 40...a5 41 ♘f5+ ♔g6 42 ♔c5 ♘d7+ 43 ♔xd5 leaves White on top.

41 b4!

White needs to stop the a-pawn advance to rule out drawing chances. Then again 41 g3 is possible because it protects the rook which is vital in view of the line 41...a5 42 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 43 ♔xd5 ♖b8 44 ♔c4 ♖b4+ 45 ♔c3 revealing White to be in good shape.

41...♖b8

On 41....♖a8 42 b5 a6 43 ♔c5! ♘c4 (43...♘d7+ 44 ♔c6 ♘e5+ 45 ♔b7 winning) 44 ♘xc4 dxc4 45 b6 and Black should give up.

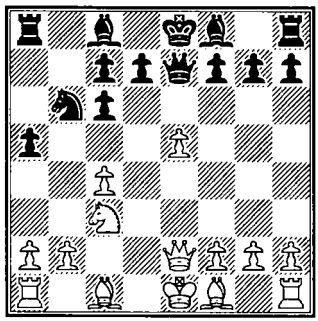
42 h4! ♖e8 43 ♘xd5

Rublevsky evaluated precisely that the forthcoming rook endgame is won for him.

43...♘xd5 44 ♔xd5 ♖e2 45 g4 hxg4 46 ♖xg4+ ♔h5 47 ♖c4 ♖b2 48 ♔c6 ♖b1 49 ♔b7 1-0

Rublevsky – Vajda
Budva 2004

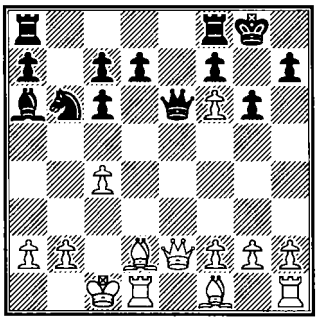
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♘c3 a5



Black advances the a-pawn so that when his bishop is developed to a6 his bishop will not blocked in as he now has the possibility of ...a5-a4. The idea of a kingside fianchetto is attractive in that it can help to apply pressure to the e5 pawn. After 9...g6 10 ♘e4 play might continue:

a) 10...♕e6 11 ♗d2 (11 ♘f6+ ♔d8 12 ♗d2 ♗a6 is delightfully

unclear but Black has a good record with it) 11...♗g7 12 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 13 exf6 0-0 14 0-0-0 ♗a6 and now:



a1) 15 ♕xe6 fxe6 16 ♗g5 d6 17 c5 ♗xf1 18 ♖hxf1 ♘d5 19 ♖fe1 ♔f7 20 ♖e4 a5 (20...h6 21 ♗xh6 ♖h8 22 ♖h4 ♔xf6 23 f4 is equal) 21 ♔b1 ♖fb8 22 ♖c1 ♖a6 23 a3 ½-½ Van der Wiel-Grabarczyk, Pula 1997

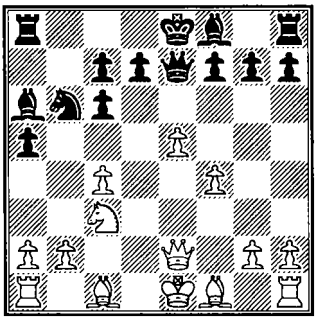
a2) 15 ♕f3 ♗xc4 16 ♕f4 (White is poised to land the queen on h6) 16...♔h8 (16...♗xa2? is a mistake in view of 17 ♕h6 ♕xf6 18 ♗c3 winning) 17 ♖e1 ♕f5 18 ♗xc4 ♕xf4 19 ♗xf4 ♘xc4 20 ♖e7 gave White a clear advantage in the ending, Zezulkin-Grabarczyk, Krakow 1999.

b) 10...♗g7 11 ♗g5 ♕b4+ (11...♕xe5?? walks into the clever trap 12 ♗f6! when White wins) 12 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♗xe5 14 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 15 ♖e1+ ♔f8 16 ♗xf6 ♖g8 17 ♗d8 led to an edge in Feygin-Mikhalchishin, Dortmund 1999.

10 f4

A speciality of Rublevsky who has not lost a game with it. Also possible is 10 ♗d2 ♗a6 11 ♕e4 ♕c5 (not 11...♕b4 due to 12 ♘b5 winning) 12 b3 0-0-0 13 f4 f6 14 exf6 gxf6 15 0-0-0 ♔b8 16 ♗e3 ♕b4 17 ♔c2 with the superior chances, Averjanov-Geraschenko, Alushta 2005.

10...♗a6



Black sticks to traditional methods and increases the pressure on the c4 pawn.

The heavyweight encounter Lautier-Hebden, Clichy 2001, saw 10...a4 11 ♕e4 g6?! Black is slow to develop so White has time to consolidate his space advantage (11...♗b7!? [intending ...d7-d5] 12 ♗e3 [12 ♗e2 d5 13 exd6 ♕xe4 14 ♘xe4 cxd6 is level] 12...♕b4 13 ♖b1 ♗e7 14 ♗d2! d5 15 exd6 ♕xd6 16 ♗e3 with an edge) 12 ♗d3 ♗g7 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗e3 f5 (14...f6? allows 15 c5 winning easily; 14...♗b7 15 ♗d4 with the brighter prospects) 15 ♕f3 gave White the better chances.

11 b3 ♕e6 12 ♗b2 ♗b4 13 0-0-0

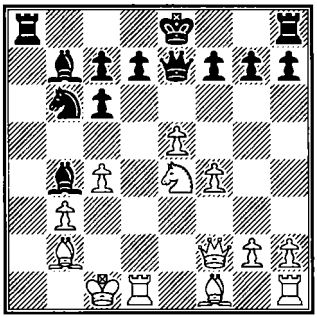
White swings the queen's rook into action which is a more positive

response than 13 ♕c2 played in Rublevsky-Adams, Rethymnon 2003, which ended in a tame draw after 13...a4 14 ♖c1 ♕h6 15 g3 0-0 16 ♗d3 d5 17 exd6 cxd6 ½-½.

13...a4 14 ♘e4 axb3 15 axb3 ♗b7

Vajda has managed to open the a-file for the benefit of his king's rook but he needs reinforcements before he can launch an attack.

16 ♕f2 ♕e7



17 ♘d6+!

A clever sacrifice which will permit White to infiltrate Black's position.

17...cxd6 18 exd6 ♕e6?

The first time I saw this game I just assumed it was a brilliancy and nobody would repeat the line for Black but things are never quite so simple at international level and indeed someone later found an improvement: 18...♕d8!?. However I would still rather be White because 19 ♗xg7 f6! (19...♖g8?? 20 ♕e2+ ♕e7 21 ♕xe7 mate) 20 ♗e2! (20 ♗xh8 ♔f7 traps the bishop with equal chances) 20...♔f7 21 ♕g3 h5?! 22 f5 gave White the initiative in Rublevsky-Zhang Zhong, Moscow 2004.

19 ♕xb6 ♗xd6 20 g3

Maybe 20 f5 is even stronger in view of 20...♕e7 21 ♕xb7 ♕e3+ 22 ♔b1 ♖b8 23 ♕a6 ♕xb3 24 ♖e1+ ♔f8 25 ♕a2 ♕c3 26 ♖c1 and the attack is repelled.

20...♗e7

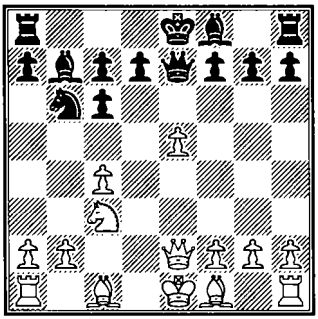
Or 20...♖b8 21 ♗g2 0-0 22 ♕d4 threatening ♕xg7 mate and ♕xd6.

21 ♗g2 ♗d8 22 ♕xb7 1-0

In the next game Black tries something different with 9...♗b7 preparing to castle queenside.

Macieja – Steflitsch
Chalkidiki 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♘c3 ♗b7



This move is just a prelude to queenside castling and does not

solve the problem of Black's cramped position.

10 ♗d2! 0-0-0

Probably better is 10...d5!? 11 exd6 cxd6 12 0-0-0 ♕xe2 13 ♗xe2 which is in White's favour because Black's pawn structure is weak.

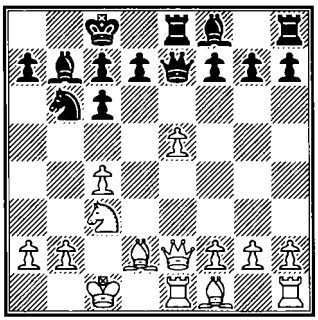
11 0-0-0 ♖e8

Black is keen to put the e-pawn under pressure. Also possible:

a) 11...g6 12 h4 h6 13 f4 d5 14 exd6 cxd6 15 h5 led to equal chances in De la Villa Garcia-Korneev, Mondariz 2000.

b) 11...f6 12 exf6 ♕xf6 13 f3 d5 14 ♕f2 ♔b8 (14...dxc4 15 ♘e4 ♕g6 16 h4 favours White) 15 ♗e3 ♗e7 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 ♔b1 with a slight plus, Gysi-Tait, Internet 2002.

12 ♖e1



Macieja is content to reinforce the e-pawn with the rook so that if Black plays ...d7-d5 he has extra support on the e-file. 12 f4 has been tried when Motylev-Zhang Zhong, Anibal 2001, continued 12...f6 13 exf6 gxf6 (13...♕xe2 14 ♗xe2 gxf6 15 ♖he1 with the better ending for White thanks to the better pawn structure) 14 ♕h5 ♖d8 15 ♗d3 ♕g7 16 ♕a5 led to the brighter prospects.

12...♕e6

Now 12...d5 presents White with the superior ending due to his better pawn structure after 13 exd6 ♕xe2 14 d7+ ♘xd7 15 ♗xe2 ♗c5 16 ♗g4.

13 f4 ♗b4?!

Black wants to complete his development so activates his dark-squared bishop. If 13...d5 then 14 ♕f2 is a strong reply in view of 14...dxc4 15 f5 ♕e7 16 g4 with the better prospects due to White's space advantage and Black's weakened queenside pawn structure.

14 ♕f2 d5

Now this strike is not so effective, but it's very hard to point out any improvement. Maybe 14...c5 is required to get the light-squared bishop into the action when 15 a3 ♗xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♘xc4 17 ♕xc5 ♘b6 18 ♗d3 favours White due to his better piece co-ordination.

15 a3! ♗xc3

After 15...♗f8 White can advantageously push Black on to the defensive by 16 f5 ♕d7 17 c5 d4 (17...♘a8 just looks embarrassing) 18 cxb6 dxc3 19 ♗xc3 cxb6 20 ♗c4.

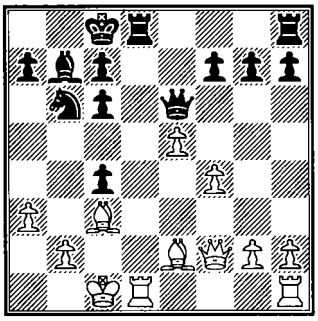
16 ♗xc3 dxc4

An optimist might point out that Black is a pawn up but the tripled c-pawns are nothing to boast about because they are so weak.

17 ♖d1

Macieja choses the solid continuation without giving Black any active counterplay. 17 f5 is also good as 17...♕d7 is met by 18 ♖g1 intending g2-g4 with the better position.

17...♖d8 18 ♗e2



18...♘d5

A better practical chance seems to be 18...c5 to relieve the light-squared bishop – Black really needs to take the gamble of a rather vulnerable c5 pawn in return for a free bishop.

19 ♗xc4 ♕f5 20 ♗d2

White's position is strategically winning, so Black must look for some tactical chances.

20...g5 21 g3 gxf4 22 gxf4 ♖hg8 23 ♖hg1

Though 23 ♕xa7? ♘xf4 24 ♖hf1 ♘d3+ 25 ♗xd3 ♕xd3 26 ♕c5 ♖d5 is still in White's favour, this capture would relinquish the offensive.

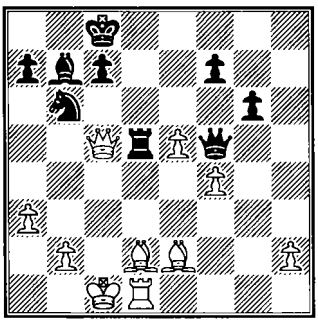
23...♖g6 24 ♖g3 ♘b6 25 ♗e2 c5!?

Too late. By now getting the bishop on b7 into play offers little hope.

26 ♖xg6

I can see nothing wrong with gleefully taking the offered pawn: 26 ♕xc5 ♖c6 (26...♖d5 27 ♕c2 invites a favourable ending: 26...♔b8 27 ♖xg6 hxg6 28 ♗e3 ♖xd1+ 29 ♗xd1 ♕d3 30 ♕d4 is good) 27 ♕xc6! ♗xc6 28 ♗g4 ♕xg4 29 ♖xg4 ♗f3 30 ♖dg1 ♗xg4 31 ♖xg4 when the extra pawn leaves White clearly on top.

26...hxg6 27 ♕xc5 ♖d5



28 ♕g1!?

If given the chance White's next move will be ♗g4 but he stands much better upon 28 ♕e7, e.g. 28...♖d7 29 ♕h4 (this active queen

supports the threat of ♗g4) 29...♕e4 30 ♕h8+! (30 ♗g4? looks reasonable but 30... ♕c4+ 31 ♔b1 ♗e4+ 32 ♔a1 ♗d5! swings the advantage to Black) 30...♖d8 31 ♗g4+ ♘d7 32 ♕h3 ♗d5 33 ♕c3 winning.

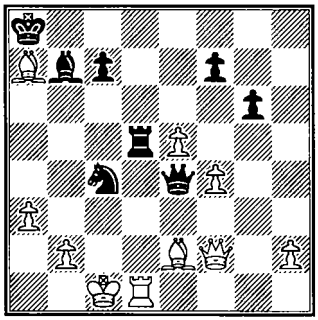
28...♔b8 29 ♗e3

Perhaps 29 ♕e3 is more precise.

29...♕e4 30 ♕f2 ♘c4?!

Black offers a pawn in the hope of complicating matters. 30...♗c8!? 31 ♕f3 ♖xd1+ (31...♗f5 32 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 33 b4 and the extra pawn gives White winning chances) 32 ♗xd1 ♕c4+ 33 ♔d2 leaves White with the better prospects.

31 ♗xa7+ ♔a8



32 ♗d4?

Yes, even top class grandmasters make mistakes! Instead 32 ♖xd5 maintains White's advantage after 32...♗xd5 33 ♗d4 ♘a5 34 ♔d2! ♘b3+ 35 ♔c3 when Black is not able to create any serious threats to compensate for the two pawns deficit.

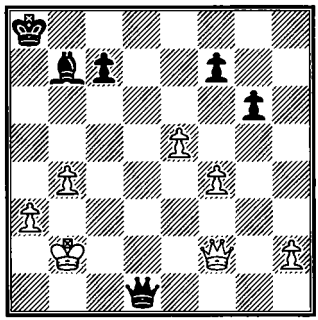
32...♘a5!

The monster threat is ...♘b3+ when suddenly White is in trouble.

33 b4

The point is that 33 ♕e3? is met by 33...♖xd4 34 ♕xd4 ♘b3 mate.

33...♘b3+ 34 ♔b2 ♖xd4 35 ♔c3 ♕c6+ 36 ♔xb3 ♕d5+ 37 ♔b2 ♖xd1 38 ♗xd1 ♕xd1



Black has all the winning prospects but White has a slim chance to draw thanks to his two pawns for the piece. The game concluded:

39 ♕c5 ♕d2+ 40 ♔b3 ♕d1+ 41 ♔b2 ♕d2+ 42 ♔b3 ♗d5+ 43 ♔a4 ♕d1+ 44 ♔a5 ♕d3?

44...♔b8 is an improvement.

45 ♕xc7 ♕xa3+ 46 ♔b5 ♕d3+ 47 ♔b6 ♕d4+ 48 ♕c5 ♕xc5+ 49 ♔xc5! ♗e6 50 ♔c6 ♔b8 51 h4 ♔c8 52 ♔d6 ♔b7 53 ♔e7 ♔c6 54 ♔f6 ♔b5 55 f5 gxf5 56 ♔g5! f4!

Amusingly 56...♔xb4?? runs into 57 ♔f4! and the h-pawn will promote.

57 ♔xf4 ♔xb4 58 h5 ♗b3 59 ♔g5 ♔c5 60 h6 ♗c2 61 ♔f6 ♔d5 ½-½

Conclusion

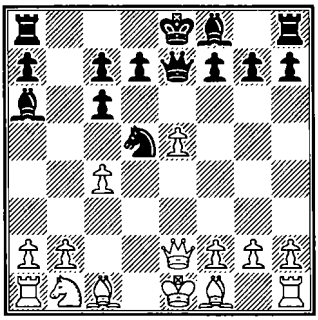
The Mieses Variation with 8...♘b6 allows White to lure his opponent into complicated lines where tactics flow. If White consistently employs the Scotch then his greater experience will stand him in good stead when handling tricky lines. This will not necessarily be the case for Black who having played 1...e5 will have all sorts of other openings on his mind such as the Ruy Lopez, the Bishop's Opening and the King's Gambit. Therefore, unless the opponent is a strong player who has diligently learned his openings, there is a fair chance that Black will go astray. However at the very top level it is clear that precise play will lead to equal opportunities in the forthcoming middlegame.

In the game **Radjabov – Karjakin** White employs 9 ♘c3 against 8...♘b6 and this is the theme of the chapter. Black responds with 9...♕e6 to attack the c4 pawn and free his dark-squared bishop. In this world class encounter it is White's aggressive set up that prevails. **Rublevsky – Lautier** follows the same pattern of moves with the addition of 10...g6. The game drifts towards equality until 19 f5 is played to sharpen the position and in the end it all works out well for White. The introduction of 9...a5, providing the option of ...a5-a4, is seen in **Rublevsky – Vajda** as a way of keeping the bishop on a6 active after White has played b2-b3 to protect the c-pawn. White chooses his favourite 10 f4 which seems to lull the strong opponent into a false sense of security as 17 ♘d6+ proves a terrific coup de grace.

The early fianchetto with 9...♗b7, in preparation for queenside castling, is seen in **Macieja – Steflitsch**. White employs a line where Black is reduced to a cramped position and this works out in White's favour.

Mieses Variation: 8...♗a6

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♗a6



History

This variation has been known for ages and, for example, was employed as long ago as the Blackburne-Zukertort match in London 1881 where it was played twice. However it failed to inspire any imitators and dropped out of fashion. It was not until the 1970s, during a Scotch revival, that it picked up again and lines were further developed. It finally became a heavyweight defence in the 1990s when chess stars such as Anand, Ivanchuk, Karpov, and Timman used it to good effect. Nowadays it is still one of the top defensive continuations for Black and its main lines have been heavily analysed.

Basic Plan for White

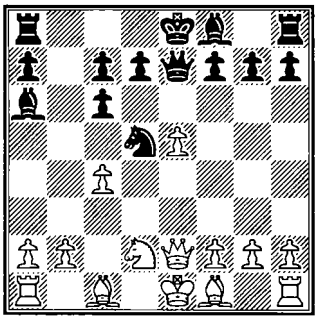
The line I advocate, 9 ♘d2, is a low maintenance idea for those with limited time for study. Though reliable it also contains its fair share of tricks and traps. The knight move adds extra protection to the c4 pawn in the hope that White can shut the enemy bishop on a6 out of the game.

Basic Plan for Black

The pin on the c4 pawn clears the path for queenside castling while allowing the knight to remain in the centre and increase Black's options. If Black wants to ensure his light-squared bishop gets back into the game then a future ...d7-d5 is one possibility. Then again, it might be necessary to play ...c6-c5 followed by dropping the bishop back to b7.

Najer – Sulskis
Pardubice 2004

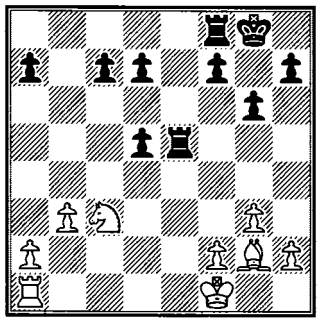
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♗a6 9 ♘d2



This is a relative side-line compared to the mass of analysis devoted to 9 b3 and to a lesser extent 9 g3. I selected the knight move because it is easy to absorb the ideas and avoids the necessity of keeping up to date with every new game. Of course it does mean that White will have to contend with a middlegame battle rather than trying to find a new idea on move 28 after a long line of theory comes to an end. Here are the main alternatives:

a) I looked at 9 b3 in depth but quickly concluded I would need to add another 30 pages to the book to satisfy myself that I had looked closely at all the various complicated suggestions. I also realised it would take the reader a lot longer to learn how to handle Black's numerous replies: 9...g5!? (this was looked upon as a sensation when Anand played it in his 1995 World Championship match against Kasparov but the idea has caught on and an echo of it is revealed in the main game) 10 g3 ♗g7 11 ♗b2 0-0-0 12 ♘d2 (12 ♗g2 ♖he8 13 0-0 ♘b6 14 ♖e1 led to equal chances in Dunn-Mitchell, Coventry 2005) 12....♘b4 13 ♘f3 c5 14 ♗g2 ♖he8 15 0-0 ♗b7 16 ♖fe1 with a level position, Mueller-Volke, Kreuzberg 2004.

b) I wanted to recommend 9 g3 but the main line 9...g6 10 b3 ♗g7 11 ♗b2 0-0 12 ♗g2 ♖ae8 13 0-0 ♗xe5 14 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 16 cxd5 ♗xf1 17 ♔xf1 cxd5 18 ♘c3



stops at this point and opinion is divided on who is better. Therefore I was reluctant to force readers to reel off 18 moves of theory while keeping a close watch on the latest developments via the internet! Rublevsky-Tseshkovsky, Sochi 2005, continued 18...c6 19 ♖d1 ♖fe8 20 ♗f3 ♔f8 21 ♘e2 ♔e7 22 ♖d4 ♔d6 23 ♖a4 ♖a8 24 ♖a5 ♔c7 25 b4 with a doubled-edged game although a draw was agreed 20 moves later.

9....0-0-0

Black moves his king out of the way so he can bring the queen's rook into play.

Also possible are:

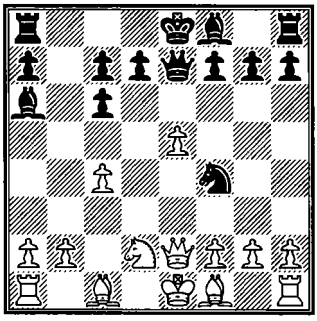
a) 9...f6 when White may continue:

a1) 10 ♘f3 fxe5 11 ♕xe5 ♕xe5+ 12 ♘xe5 ♘f6 13 ♗d3 with a level ending;

a2) 10 exf6 ♘xf6 11 b3 0-0-0 12 ♗b2 ♖e8 13 ♕xe7 ♖xe7+ 14 ♗e2 ♖e6 15 a3 ♗c5 16 ♔f1 ♖he8 17 ♗f3 led to equal opportunities in Makropoulou-Zlatanova, Athens 1992.

a3) 10 ♕e4 ♘b6 11 exf6 ♕xe4+ 12 ♘xe4 ♗xc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 14 b3 ♘d6 ½-½ Sax-Ivkov, Novi Sad 1976.

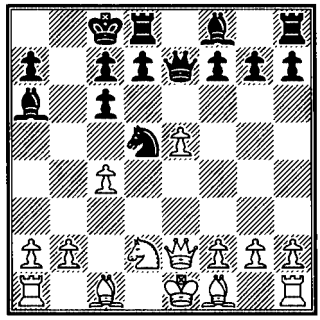
b) 9...♘f4 and now:



10 ♕e4 ♘g6 11 f4 (the advantage of having the queen on e4 is that a quick ...d7-d6 is ruled out because then the c6 pawn would be loose) 11...0-0-0 12 g3 d5 13 cxd5 ♗xf1 14 d6! ♕d7 15 dxc7 ♔xc7 16 ♔xf1 ♕h3+ 17 ♔e2 with the better chances, Alburt-Radashkovich, Dubna 1970.

10 ♕e3 ♘g6 11 f4 d6 12 g3 ♕e6 13 ♗g2 ♘e7 14 0-0 d5 15 ♕f2 led to the advantage in Vajda-Holzmann, Balatonbereny 1996.

The alternatives 9...♘b4, 9....g6 and 9...♘b6 are discussed later in the chapter.



10 b3

White prepares a queenside fianchetto to help support the c4 pawn and bring a bishop to b2 in order to defend e5. White has various alternatives:

a) 10 ♘f3 when Black may try:

a1) 10...♖e8 11 ♕c2 ♘b6 (11...♘b4?! allows White to seize the initiative by 12 ♕a4 ♗b7 13 a3 ♘a6 14 c5!) 12 ♗e2 f6 13 0-0 fxe5 14 ♗e3 c5 15 b4 led to double-edged play in Oll-San Claudio Gonzalez, Oviedo 1991.

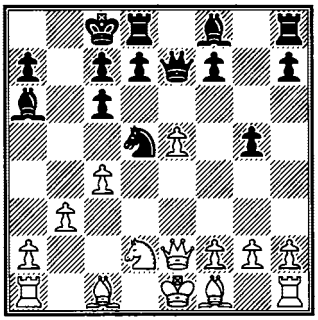
a2) 10...f6 11 ♕c2 ♘b6 12 ♗d3 fxe5 13 0-0 h6 14 ♖e1 g5 (14...d6 is met by 15 c5! ♗xd3 16 ♕xd3 favouring White) 15 ♖xe5 ♕g7 16 ♖a5 ♗b7 17 ♗d2 gave White a clear advantage in Vukovic-Todorovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998.

b) 10 ♕e4 to avoid the pin is a decent possibility: 10...♘b6 11 c5 ♗xf1 12 cxb6 ♗a6 13 bxa7 ♔b7 and now:

b1) 14 b3 f6 15 ♘c4 ♗xc4 (15...d5! 16 ♘a5+ ♔a8 17 ♕e3 ♕e6 is slightly better for Black because the white king is stuck in the middle of the board) 16 bxc4 ♕xe5 17 ♕xe5 fxe5 18 ♗e3 c5 with an equal position, Hitech-Krabbe, Man v Machine, The Hague 1994.

b2) 14 ♘b3 ♕b4+ 15 ♕xb4+ ♗xb4+ 16 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 17 ♔xd2 d6 (Black rightly guards the c5 square while preparing to shed the problem of his doubled c-pawns) 18 exd6 (or 18 f4 dxe5+ 19 ♔e3 ♖he8 is level) 18...cxd6 19 ♖he1 ♖d7 20 ♖ac1 with equal chances, Trescher-Dijckmans, Dresden 2000.

10...g5?!



The pawn lunge is well motivated to stop f2-f4 and its origin, from a Kasparov-Anand game, can be traced by looking at the note to White's ninth move. The line with 10...f6 is critical because it forces an ending where White has to rely on his better co-ordinated pieces to seek an advantage. After 11 ♗b2 fxe5 12 0-0-0 ♘f6 13 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘g4 White can try:

a) 15 ♗g3 ♗a3+ 16 ♔c2 ♖hf8 17 ♘f3 ♗c5 18 ♖d2 d5 (White has prevented all the tactics so now the task is to use the bishop on a6) 19 ♗h4 (I prefer 19 ♗d3!? to try and keep the bishop on a6 out of the action) 19...♘f6 (19...dxc4 20 bxc4 with the better chances for White) 20 cxd5 ♗xf1 21 ♖xf1 cxd5 22 ♖fd1 c6 23 ♘e5 with a level position, Amonatov-Kuznetsov, Voronezh 2003.

b) 15 ♗d4 c5! (the bishop cannot go back to b2 because of the threat against f2) 16 ♗e2 cxd4 17 ♗xg4 ♗b7 18 ♗f3 ♖e8 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♘f3 c5 21 ♖he1 led to equal chances in Sulskis-Hernandez, Yucatan 2004.

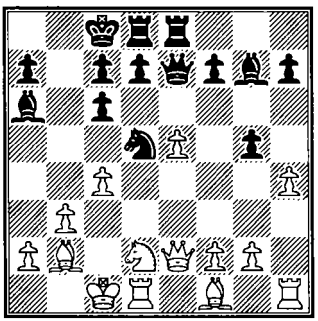
11 ♗b2 ♗g7 12 0-0-0

Najer tucks his king away and brings the rook into play.

12...♖he8

Not 12...d6 because then 13 ♕g4+ breaks the pin and enables cxd5.

13 h4!



White wants to undermine the kingside and open the g-file so he can break the pin on the c4 pawn by advantageously moving the queen.

13....gxh4?!

Or 13...h6 14 hxg5 hxg5 15 ♕g4 ♘f4 16 ♘f3 with the better chances because the g-pawn is vulnerable.

14 ♕g4 f5

The only move because the knight on d5 and the bishop on g7 are under attack.

15 ♕d4 ♘b4

If 15...♘b6 16 ♘f3 d6 17 ♗d3 continues to be in White's favour.

16 ♕xa7 ♗b7 17 a3 ♘a6 18 b4

Maybe 18 ♘f3 to secure the e5 pawn will halt any hint of counterplay and allow White to make progress on the queenside.

18...c5 19 ♘b3 ♗xe5 20 b5 ♕f6

The retreat 20...♘b8 allows 21 ♘xc5 when 21...♗e4 22 ♘xe4 ♗xb2+ 23 ♔xb2 ♕xe4 24 ♕d4 gives White the advantage.

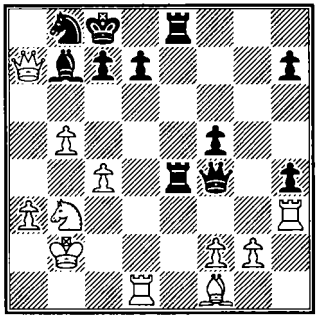
21 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖h3 ♘b8

Or 22...♕f4+ 23 ♔b1 ♗e4+ 24 ♔a1 ♘b8 25 f3 ♗c2 26 ♘xc5 wins.

23 ♕xc5 ♕f4+

23...♕xc5 24 ♘xc5 ♗a8 25 ♖xh4 leads to a superior ending.

24 ♔b2 ♖e5 25 ♕d4 ♖e4 26 ♕a7 ♖de8?



27 ♘a5!

White has calculated that he has nothing to fear from a few harmless checks and goes for the attack.

27....♖e2+ 28 ♔b3 ♗xg2

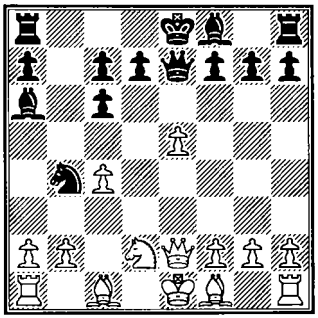
28...♕e4 is met by 29 ♗xe2 winning.

29 ♗xg2 ♕xf2 30 ♗b7+ 1-0

One way to try and exploit the knight being on d2 is to target the c2 square by 9...♘b4.

Arkhipov – Lukjanenko
Voronezh 1997

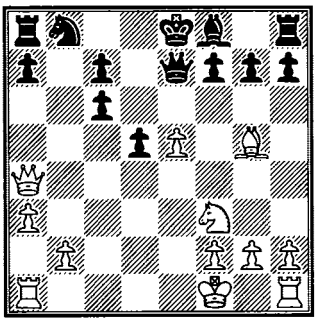
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♗a6 9 ♘d2 ♘b4



The knight targets the temporarily vulnerable c2 square to make the most of the knight being developed to d2.

10 ♘f3 c5

Black provides a square for the knight to retreat. Black attempts to exploit the pin on the f1-a6 diagonal with 10...d5 and after 11 a3! ♗xc4 12 ♕d1 ♗xf1 13 ♔xf1 ♘a6 14 ♕a4 ♘b8 15 ♗g5 Black can try:



a) 15...♕d7? 16 e6! (a great trick which swings the game hugely in White's favour) 16...fxe6 17 ♘e5 1-0 H.Janssen-Euwe, Amsterdam 1979. The idea is 17...♕d6 18 ♕f4 ♗e7 19 ♕f7+ ♔d8 20 ♕xg7 winning. However, I should point out that the former world champion playing Black was very elderly at the time!

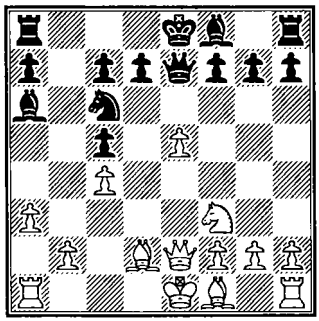
b) 15...♕e6! 16 ♖c1 ♗e7! (16...h6!? 17 ♗h4 ♗e7 18 ♘d4 ♕d7 19 e6 fxe6 20 ♘xe6 g5 21 ♖e1 1-0 Tatai-Adorjan, Amsterdam 1977) 17 ♘d4 ♕d7

b1) 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘xc6 (19 e6?! 0-0 is better for Black) 19...♕d7 20 ♕c2 ♘xc6 21 ♕xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♖xc6 ♔d7 23 ♖c5 is equal.

b2) 18 h4 0-0 19 ♖h3 ♖e8 20 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 (20...♕xe7!? 21 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 22 ♕xc6 ♖ad8 is level) 21 ♕b4 with an edge, Strikovic-Voiska, Zaragoza 1993.

b3) 18 e6 fxe6 19 ♗xe7 ♔xe7! (19...♕xe7? allows 20 ♘xe6! with advantage) 20 ♕b4+ (20 ♘xe6? is useless upon 20...♔xe6) 20...♕d6 21 ♕b7 ♘d7 22 ♖xc6 ♖hb8! 23 ♕a6 ♕f4! 24 ♘e2 ♕d2 25 g3 ♖b6 gave Black all the chances in Tseitlin-Mikhalevski, Beersheba 1997.

11 a3 ♘c6 12 ♗d2



White is keeping his options open by preparing ♗c3 to protect the e-pawn, queenside castling or the adventurous b2-b4.

12...0-0-0?!

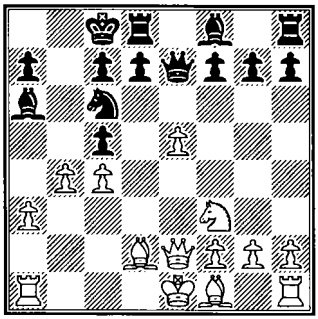
Black follows the standard idea of castling queenside quickly but this allows White to stage an attack. Instead 12...♕e6 is a sterner test:

a) 13 0-0-0 ♗e7 14 ♕e4 ♗b7 15 ♗c3 ♘a5 16 ♕f4 ♘b3+ 17 ♔c2

♖b8 18 ♗d3 (18 ♔xb3?? fails spectacularly to 18...♗xf3+) 18...g6 19 h4 led to roughly equal chances in Peters-Sanga, Internet 2004.

b) 13 ♗c3 ♗e7 14 0-0-0 f6 (or 14...0-0 15 h4! ♖ae8 16 ♕e4 intending ♗d3 with decent chances but perhaps 14...♖b8 needs to be thought about) 15 exf6 ♕xe2 16 f7+ ♔xf7 17 ♗xe2 ♖ad8 18 ♗d3 with the superior ending, Svidler-Yemelin, St Petersburg 1995.

13 b4



The pawn advance sparks an aggressive attack on the queenside. Instead 13 ♗c3 allows 13...d5! to equalise after 14 exd6 ♖xd6! 15 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 16 ♗e2, Oll-Kalinin, USSR 1986. However 13 0-0-0 is certainly worth taking seriously: 13...♖e8 (13...h6 14 ♗c3 ♕e6 15 h4 g6 16 ♕e3 ♔b8 17 ♕f4 when White is on top due to his space advantage) 14 ♕d3 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♖e1 ♕xe1+ 17 ♗xe1 ♖xe1+ 18 ♔d2 with a material advantage and the white queen able to accelerate the attacking chances.

13...♗b7

The pawn is taboo because 13...cxb4? invites complications that benefit White: 14 axb4 ♘xb4 15 ♖a4! c5 16 ♗xb4 cxb4 17 ♖xa6 winning.

14 ♖b1 d6?!

Black wants to take out the stronghold represented by the e5 pawn but this works out poorly.

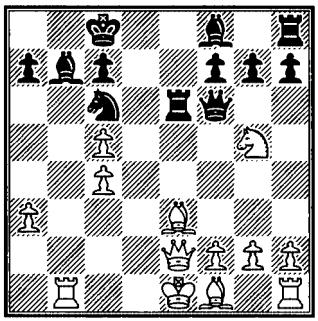
15 exd6 ♖xd6

Instead 15...cxd6 16 ♗e3 ♕f6 17 ♕c2 intending to develop the light-squared bishop followed by castling kingside

16 bxc5 ♖e6 17 ♗e3

White blocks the e-file and protects the c5 pawn.

17...♕f6 18 ♘g5



18...♖xe3!?

Black spots a chance to try and bamboozle White by giving up the exchange. Or 18...♖e7 19 ♕g4+ ♔b8 20 ♘e4 ♕e5 21 ♘d2 with the better prospects.

19 ♕xe3 ♗xc5 20 ♘e4

Arkhipov is happy to head for the ending thanks to his material advantage.

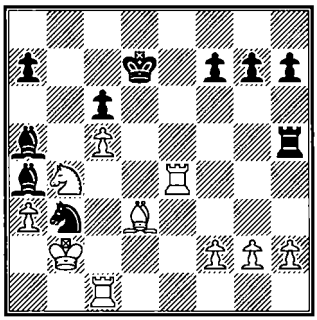
20...♗xe3 21 ♘xf6 ♗b6

Instead 21...♗xf2+ 22 ♔xf2 gxf6 23 ♗d3 is bleak for Black.

22 ♘d5 ♖e8+ 23 ♔d1 ♗a5 24 ♗d3 ♘d4 25 ♔c1

White has to indulge in some manoeuvring before trying to convert his material advantage and the first stage is to co-ordinate the rooks.

25...♗c6 26 ♔b2 ♔d7 27 ♘b4 ♗a4 28 c5 ♖e5 29 ♖bc1 c6 30 ♖he1 ♖h5 31 ♖e4 ♘b3



32 ♖d1

White has a definite advantage but misses a clear route to victory: 32 ♗e2! ♖xh2 (32...♘xc1 33 ♗xh5 ♘b3 34 ♗g4+ ♔d8 35 ♘d3 revealing an attack against the bishop on a4) 33 ♖d1+ (now Black cannot avoid mate) 33...♔c7 34 ♖e7+ ♔c8 35 ♖e8+ ♔c7 36 ♘a6+ ♔b7 37 ♖b8 mate.

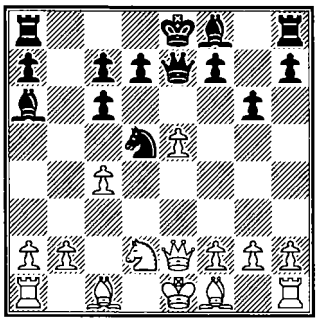
The game concluded:

32...♘xc5 33 ♗c2+ ♔c7 34 ♖e7+ ♔b6 35 ♖xf7 g6 36 h3 ♗b5 37 ♖d8 ♘e6 38 ♖b8+ ♔c5 39 ♗d3 ♗c7 40 ♖c8 ♗e5+ 41 ♔a2 ♘d4 42 ♗xb5 ♔xb5 43 ♖b7+ ♔c5 44 ♖xa7 ♖f5 45 f3 h5 46 ♖e7 ♔d6 47 ♖ee8 ♗f6 48 ♖f8 c5 49 ♘d3 ♘e6 50 ♖f7 h4 51 ♔b3 ♘g5 52 ♖a7 ♘e6 53 ♔c4 ♗d4 54 ♖b8 ♔c6 55 ♖a5 ♔c7 56 ♖e8 ♘f8 57 ♖e7+ ♔d8 58 ♖aa7 ♗g1 59 ♖g7 1-0

In the next game Black attempts to undermine the e5 pawn with a quick kingside fianchetto:

Van Wessel – Jonkman
Amsterdam 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♗a6 9 ♘d2 g6



The kingside fianchetto is played to enable Black to exert pressure on the e5 pawn.

10 b3 ♗g7 11 ♗b2

It is worth pointing out that this position can also be reached via a different move order.

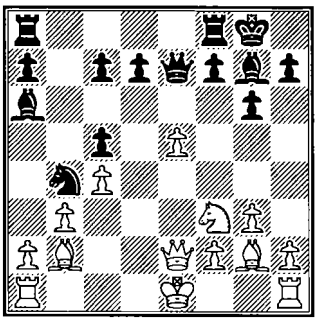
11...♘b4!

Black reacts sharply by threatening ...♘c2+ to make the most of the white knight being on d2.

12 ♘f3 c5

This is simply to make room for a knight retreat to c6.

13 g3 0-0 14 ♗g2



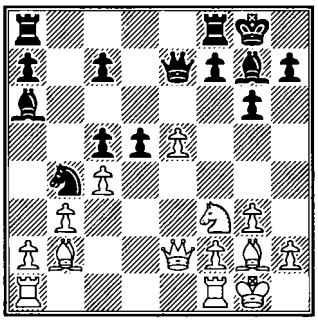
14...d5

This is consistent with Black's odd-looking piece formation because it makes use of the bishop on a6. Black can also try:

a) 14....♖ae8 15 0-0 d6 16 ♘e1 (the threat is a2-a3 when Black will have no escape square) 16...♕d7 17 ♕d2 (17 f4!? looks like a decent alternative) 17...♗xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 19 a3 ♘c6 20 ♘d3 ♖e7 21 ♘f4 (21 ♘xc5 dxc5 22 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 23 ♗xc6 ♖d3 24 ♗a4 is also worth considering) 21...♘d4 22 ♕a5 with equal chances, Hjartarson-Portisch, Reykjavik 1991.

b) 14...♗b7 15 0-0 ♖ae8 16 ♕d2 ♕d8 17 ♖fe1 ♖e7 18 a3 gave White an edge because he can endeavour to defend the e-pawn by doubling rooks on the e-file, Karpov-Kolosowski, Koszalin simul 1998.

15 0-0

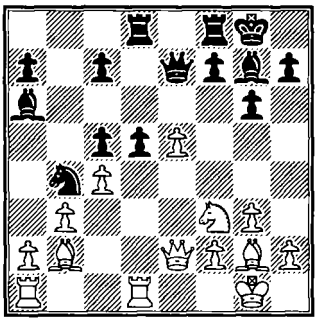


15...♖ad8

Jonkman takes his queen's rook off the h1-a8 diagonal and supports the d-pawn. In the game Sveshnikov-Kharitonov, Leningrad 1991, Black released the tension in the centre which made things easier for White: 15...dxc4 16 bxc4 ♖ad8 17 ♖fd1 ♕e6 18 ♗f1 ♗b7 (18...♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♘xa2 20 ♘g5!? ♕e7 21 f4 ♘b4 22 ♘e4 ♗b7 23 ♗g2 offers equal chances) 19 ♘g5 ♕f5 20 f4 h6 21 ♘f3 g5 22 a3 (22 ♗g2 is worth investigating in view of 22...gxf4 23 ♘h4 ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 f3 25 ♘xf3 is better for White) 22...♘c2 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♖c1 ♘d4 25 ♘xd4 cxd4 26 ♖d1 gxf4 27 ♖xd4 led to equal chances.

16 a3!?

The knight is pushed away from the b4 outpost. Just one good reason to play this is to side-step the established theory that belongs to 16 ♖fd1.



For example:

a) 16...♖fe8 when play might continue:

a1) 17 ♘e1 dxc4 (17...♕d7? 18 a3 ♘c6 19 ♖xd5 with a clear advantage, Collas-Sanchez Aller, Lisbon 2001) 18 bxc4 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♗xe5 20 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 22 a3 ♗xc4 23 axb4 cxb4 24 f4 with a tricky ending because although Black has three pawns for the piece it will take time to advance all of them, Schaper-Johansson, Internet 1998.

a2) 17 a3 ♘c6 18 ♕c2 (18 ♖e1 should be considered) 18...d4! (Black opens the h1-a8 diagonal in order to bring his light-squared bishop back into the game) 19 ♖e1 ♕d7 20 b4 ♘xe5 21 b5 ♗c8 22 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 gave Black winning chances thanks to his extra pawn in Svidler-Adams, Tilburg 1997.

b) 16...♘c6 17 ♖ac1 ♖fe8 18 ♖e1 dxc4 19 bxc4 ♘b4 20 ♖c3!? (an enterprising sacrifice hoping for active play as compensation for the pawn) 20...♘xa2 21 ♖a3 ♘b4 22 ♗h3 ♗b7 23 ♖xa7 ♗xf3 24 ♕xf3 ♘d3 25 ♖e2 ♗xe5 (Black has an extra pawn but it is difficult to make use of it due to White's active pieces) 26 ♗c3 ♕d6 27 ♗a5 ♕f6 28 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 29 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 30 ♗f1 ♘e1 31 ♖xc7 ♗d4 32 ♗xe1 ♖xe1 33 ♖a7 ½-½ Tiviakov-Kuzmin, Doha 2002.

16...♘c6 17 ♖fe1

Van Wessel is content just to defend the e-pawn and make room on f1 for a bishop to cover the c4 pawn if necessary.

17...♖fe8 18 ♕c2 d4 19 ♘d2

White can get away with this manoeuvre because 19...♘xe5 runs into 20 f4 exploiting the pin.

19....♕e6 20 f4

A key idea in this line is to support the advanced e-pawn, while the traditional break ...f7-f6 is currently ruled out due to the threat of ♗d5.

20...♘e7 21 ♘e4 ♕b6 22 ♔h1

A cautious move to get away from any irritating checks on the g1-a7 diagonal if he can find the right time to play b3-b4. I would prefer 22 ♖ab1, intending ♕d3 to block the d-pawn, ♗c1 and eventually b3-b4.

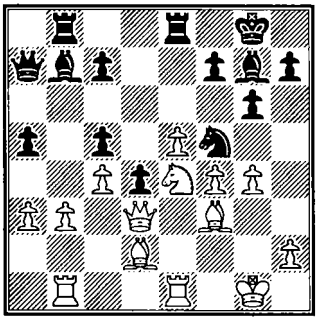
22....♘f5 23 ♕d3 ♘e3 24 ♗f3 ♗b7 25 ♗c1 ♘f5?!

The Dutch grandmaster makes it easier for White by retreating. A sterner test is 25...f6! when 26 exf6 ♗xe4 27 ♗xe4 ♗xf6 offers equal chances.

26 ♗d2 a5 27 ♖ab1

The fight is on to force through b3-b4.

27...♕a7 28 ♔g1 ♖b8 29 g4!



Now that the black queen has taken up residence far away on a7 the time is right to pursue his kingside ambitions.

29...♘e7

After 29...♘h4 the reason for the king moving again is revealed because 30 ♗h1 leaves the knight on the side of the board somewhat stranded.

30 ♘f6+ ♔h8

Or 30...♗xf6 31 exf6 ♘c6 32 ♗d5 intending ♕d3-h3-h6 with a big advantage.

31 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 32 ♖e2

White has extra material and can now look for a decisive breakthrough.

32...♘c6 33 ♖be1 ♗f8 34 ♗d5 ♘d8 35 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 36 e6

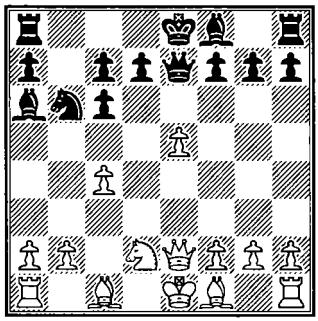
A ploy to allow the rooks to infiltrate Black's position which if ignored will grant White a very strong passed pawn.

36...f6 37 f5 g5 38 e7 ♗g7 39 ♕f3 a4 40 ♕c6 ♘d6 41 ♖e6 ♕b8 42 ♗a5 1-0

If the knight retreats with 9...♘b6 White can enjoy a space advantage and seek to rapidly develop his pieces:

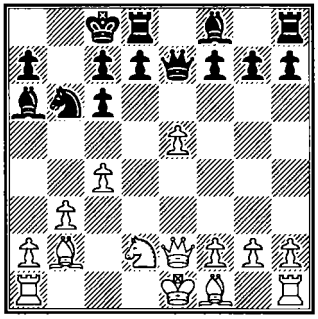
Langer – Molina
Tulsa 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♗a6 9 ♘d2 ♘b6!?



The knight retreats to increase pressure against the c4 pawn. This is only occasionally played because with a bishop on a6 it is deemed rather passive.

10 b3 0-0-0 11 ♗b2



11...♔b8!?

A careful move which is designed to wait and see what White is planning.

Other moves:

a) 11...♖e8 12 0-0-0 d5 13 ♕g4+ ♔b8 14 cxd5 (14 ♕f4!? maintains White's space advantage) 14...♗c8 15 d6 cxd6 16 exd6 ♗xg4 17 dxe7 ♖xe7 18 f3 ♗f5 19 g4 ♗c8 20 ♘c4 f6 21 h4 h6 22 ♗d4 gave White the advantage in Meulders-Rivas Pastor, Marbella 1982.

b) 11...g6 12 0-0-0 ♗g7 13 f4 and now:

b1) 13...d5 14 ♕e3 dxc4 15 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 16 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 17 bxc4 ♔b7 18 ♕b3+ ♔a8 19 ♗d4 ♖b8 20 ♕a4 ♖b7 21 ♖d3 (or 21 ♕xc6 ♕a3+ 22 ♔d2 ♕xa2+ 23 ♔e3 is much better for White despite his king going for a walk) 21...♕e6 22 ♖hd1 ♖c8 23 ♖b3 ♖cb8? 24 ♗xa7! 1-0 Harding-Shivodov, Corr 1978.

b2) 13...♖he8 14 ♕f2 d6 (14...♗b7 is a suggestion by Keres presumably to avoid the forthcoming positional crisis but Black will nevertheless remain passive) 15 c5! ♗xf1 16 ♕xf1 dxc5 17 ♕a6+ ♔b8 18 ♘c4 gave White the better chances because the triple c-pawns are weak, Pinkas-Pioch, Gdynia 1973.

c) 11...d5 12 exd6 (12 ♕e3 is encouraging in view of 12...dxc4 13 ♖c1 with the advantage) 12...♕xe2+ 13 ♗xe2 cxd6 14 0-0-0 with a level position, Vukovic-Bellia, Porto San Giorgio 1996.

12 0-0-0 ♗b7?!

A passive response designed to activate the bishop by ...c6-c5.

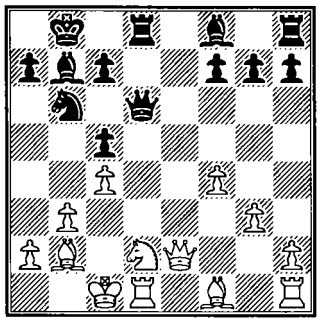
13 f4

White can carry on with the usual tasks of supporting the e-pawn while Black is suffering from passivity.

13...d5 14 exd6 ♕xd6

Black has managed to free his pieces at the cost of having to put up with weak doubled c-pawns. If 14...♕xe2 then 15 dxc7+ ♔xc7 16 ♗xe2 wins a pawn.

15 g3 c5



Black frees his light-squared bishop but White still dominates the position.

16 ♗g2 ♗xg2 17 ♕xg2 ♕g6 18 ♘f3 ♗d6

If 18...♗e7 then 19 ♘e5, heading for the c6 square, is lethal.

19 ♖d2 f6 20 ♘h4 ♕h5 21 ♕e2 ♕f7

The ending with 21...♕xe2 is in White's favour because Black's terrible pawn structure is a long-term worry. For instance: 22 ♖xe2 ♖he8 23 ♖he1 ♖xe2 24 ♖xe2 with the better position.

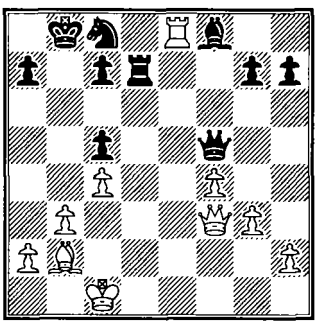
22 ♘f5 ♖he8 23 ♕f3 ♗f8

Black is hoping exchanges will lessen the attack but it is a difficult task.

24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♘e3 ♖d7 26 ♖e1 f5?

Or 26...♗d6 when 27 ♘f5 keeps White on top.

27 ♘xf5! ♕xf5 28 ♖e8+ ♘c8



29 ♖xc8+!

A marvellous way to secure victory in style.

29...♔xc8 30 ♕a8 mate

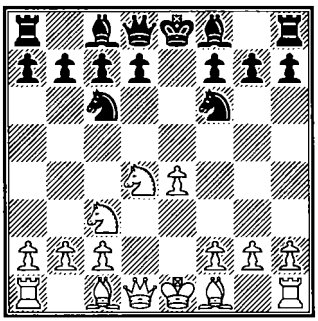
Conclusion

The Mieses Variation with 8...♗a6 is a stout defence and 9 ♘d2 is designed to avoid a hefty amount of theory yet still emerge from the opening with decent opportunities.

Najer – Sulskis examines 9...0-0-0 which is recommended in various sources such as *Nunn's Chess Openings* so White needs to be prepared. This top level encounter sways in favour of White but is admittedly helped by the rash 10...g5 which weakens the black kingside. In the game **Arkhipov – Lukjanenko** Black tries 9...♘b4 in order to gain time by exploiting the fact that the knight is on d2 and it should have offered good chances of equality had he not prematurely castled queenside. **Van Wessel – Jonkman** considers the sequence 9...g6 coupled with ...♘b4 and this is a critical line. It is worth following the example with 16 a3 which is slightly different from the established line and looks promising. What do when Black plays passively is revealed in **Langer – Molina** where 9...♘b6 is a quiet continuation. White finds it easier to improve his pieces by using his space advantage and manages to find a clever mating combination.

Scotch Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3



History

This positional line came to prominence in the first official World Championship match in 1886. The eventual winner Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900) played it against Johannes Hermann Zukertort (1842-88), which naturally spread the word. It was somewhat different from the usual swashbuckling King's Gambit, popular at the time, and attracted those who had a feel for such a modern opening. Perhaps this is why Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935) practised it, successfully, for some time. This added to the line's status because Nimzo was a world class player and is still fondly remembered today through the pages of his classic work *My System*. The variation undoubtedly has a fine pedigree and in fact has always been highly regarded. However by the 1950s top players were finding it hard to achieve anything more than a draw in this solid variation and devoted less time to it – although even in the 1970s it still had its supporters, e.g. Kurajica and Radulov. But then came a new lease of life in the 90s after the Scotch revival inspired by Kasparov and a re-examination of various older lines in an attempt to discover ways of breathing new life into the opening. This had the desired result and attracted grandmasters such as Hector, Nunn, Salov and Spassky who in turn inspired a new generation of club players to take up the line. Nowadays, it is still a regular guest at the highest level and has been employed recently by the young American champion Nakamura.

Basic Plan for White

The idea is to develop the kingside rapidly and postpone any confrontation until the middlegame. In the main line the knights settle on

c3 and f3, a bishop is posted on d3 and then comes kingside castling. Of course the reason for the line's enduring popularity is that it is easy to play and there are a few tactical tricks for Black to watch out for in all variations. Thus it is ideal for those who want to play something sound in the opening yet have possibilities of a kingside attack.

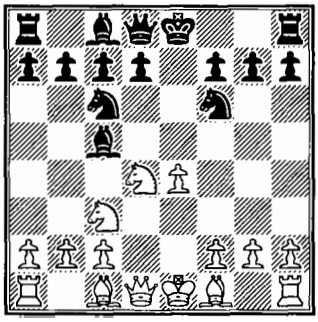
Basic Plan for Black

The main line has been fairly well worked out for the first ten moves so these should be navigated comfortably. It is then a matter of understanding the ideas behind White's manoeuvres which at times can be quite subtle. Therefore Black should take a little time to study the various lines and get to grips with them. Then a well prepared player will be able to find a route to equality and thereafter it is a matter of dealing with the middlegame battle.

I have noticed a trend among strong players to avoid the main lines when facing the Scotch because of the general feeling that White's solid opening is difficult to break down. Therefore I have made a point of discussing a few early deviations:

Senff – Reeh
German Team Championship 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗c5



This is a good example of Black endeavouring to avoid the main lines and trying to make White think for himself right from the early stages. This ploy can work so it is best to have something ready against it. 5...♗b4 is the main continuation discussed at length in the rest of the chapter, while 5...g6 should be met by 6 ♗e3 with similar play to the 4...g6 line in the *Other Black Defences* chapter. Finally, 5...♘xe4 is examined in the next main game.

6 ♘xc6

I think this is the easiest way to handle the opening. Also possible is 6 ♗e3 ♗b6 and now:

a) 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5:

a1) 8...♘g8?! 9 ♕g4 ♔f8 10 ♕f4 ♗xe3 11 ♕xe3 ♘h6 12 0-0-0 with the advantage because Black will have trouble because of his poorly placed king, Gluzman-Smirnov, Canberra 2001.

a2) 8...♗xe3 is a sterner test when Smerdon-Mastrovasilis, Goa 2002, continued 9 fxe3 ♘d5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♕xd5 ♕h4+ 12 ♔d1 ♖b8 13 ♕d4 ♖b4 14 ♕c5 ♖xb2 15 ♗c4

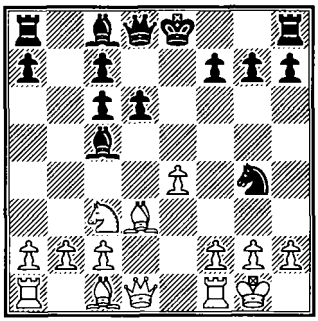
♕h5+ 16 ♔d2 when White's king is relatively safe and his compensation lies in Black's problems with castling.

b) 7 g3!? is unusual but at the time I was in the mood to experiment: 7...0-0 8 ♗g2 d6 9 h3 (I wanted to stop Black activating his bishop via g4) 9...♖e8 10 0-0 ♗d7 11 ♖e1 led to equal chances in Lane-Hebden, London 1994.

6...bxc6 7 ♗d3 d6

7...d5 slightly favours White because the position will be similar to the main line but with the bishop on c5 there is no pressure on White's queen's knight. For instance: 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♖e1 ♖b8 11 ♖b1 with a slight edge, Santo Roman-Lana Prieto, Candas 1992.

8 0-0 ♘g4



An aggressive idea making way for the queen to join in the kingside attack. Instead 8...♘d7 has been tried with the same theme: 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 ♘a4! (the dark-squared bishop is the key to Black's success so preparations to exchange it have started) 10...♗b6 11 b3 ♕h4 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 f3 ♗a6 14 c4 (White shuts out the bishop on a6 from the action) 14...c5 15 ♗b2 and the bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal gave White the superior chances, Miles-Hebden, London 1994.

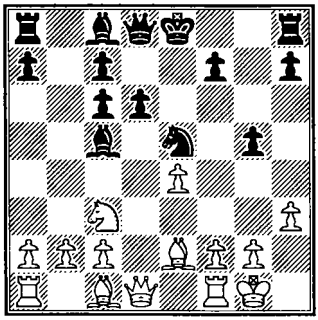
9 h3!?

The game Miles-Sorin, Matanzas 1995 deals with 9 ♗f4, primarily designed to defend h2, and is certainly impressive. However, I couldn't help wonder why Black still plays this line until I found a serious improvement: 9...g5!? (It is rather unusual for Black to start attacking so early in the Scotch, especially after only 9 moves, but the idea is to unsettle White and provoke a mistake. However Black needs to be less robust in the opening and try 9...♕f6!? when 10 ♕d2 0-0 11 h3 ♘e5 12 ♘a4 offers roughly equal chances) 10 ♗d2 (The bishop retreats so it can keep an eye on the weakened g-pawn. Instead 10 ♗g3?! allows Black to create an initiative upon 10...h5 11 h3 h4 12 ♗h2 ♘xh2 13 ♔xh2 g4!) 10...♕f6 11 ♕e2 (the f2 pawn is protected with White aiming to consolidate before trying to undermine Black's position) 11...♕e5 (or 11...♕h6!? 12 h3 ♘e5 13 ♘a4 ♗d4 14 c3 with a slight edge) 12 g3 and now instead of 12...♕e6 13 ♘a4! as played in the game I think Black can improve with 12...h5! when a sample line runs 13 ♘a4 ♘xh2! 14 ♔xh2 h4 15 ♘xc5 (15 ♔g2 ♗h3+! 16 ♔xh3 hxg3+ 17 ♔g2 ♖h2+ 18 ♔g1 gxf2+ 19 ♖xf2 ♕g3+ 20 ♔f1 ♖h1 mate) 15...hxg3+ 16 ♔g2 ♖h2+ 17 ♔g1 ♗h3 winning.

9...♘e5 10 ♗e2

The bishop drops back with the aim of playing ♘a4 to capture the bishop, followed by f2-f4 dislodging the knight from its central square. 10 ♘a4, intending to exchange the dark-squared bishop as soon as possible, is also a sound option: 10...♗b6 11 ♘xb6 axb6 12 f4 (12 ♗d2 0-0 13 ♗c3 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 ♕h4 15 ♖fe1 with a level position, Volzhin-Hebden, Hastings 1993) 12...♘xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♗a6 14 c4 led to roughly equal chances in Seger-Pirrot, Saarbruecken 2002.

10...g5?!



An understandable reaction to White's plan but it does voluntarily concede a long-term weakness on the kingside. 10...a6, to give the bishop a chance to avoid exchange, is reasonable when 11 ♔h2 aiming to play f2-f4 maintains the tension.

11 ♘a4 ♗b6 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 f4

Senff keeps faith with his opening plan in the knowledge that the semi-open f-file will present him with attacking chances.

13...gxf4 14 ♗xf4 ♗e6 15 ♕d2 ♖g8 16 ♕c3

The queen defends against the threat of ...♗xh3 and also puts pressure on the c6 pawn.

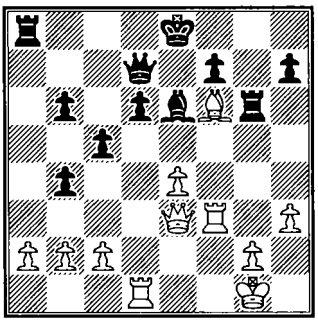
16...c5 17 ♗b5+ c6

Or 17...♗d7 18 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 19 ♕f3 (threatening ♗xd6 followed by ♕xf7+) 19...♖g7 20 ♖ad1 when the plan of e4-e5 gives White the better chances.

18 ♗xe5 cxb5 19 ♗f6

The good thing for White is that Black will have problems creating harmony for his pieces because ...♔d7 is needed to connect his rooks.

19...♕d7 20 ♖f3 b4 21 ♕e3 ♖g6 22 ♖d1



22...♕c6

Although 22...♖xa2 has the merit of winning a pawn, with the rook away from defensive duties White can crank up the pressure by 23 ♕f4! when 23...♗xh3 is well met by 24 ♖fd3! ♖xg2+ 25 ♔h1 with a clear advantage.

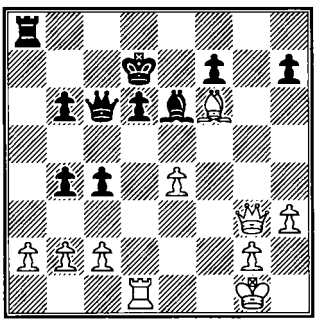
23 ♕f4 c4

If Black counters the threat with 23...d5 then 24 exd5 helps to open the central lines and promote the onslaught after 24...♗xd5 25 ♕e5+ ♗e6 26 ♗g5 after which ♕h8+ is a worry for Black and 26...♖g8 27 ♖fd3 wins.

24 ♖g3

The d-pawn can be taken at White's leisure so he endeavours to increase his advantage by exchanging another defender. Instead 24 ♖xd6 ♖xf6 25 ♖xc6 ♖xf4 26 ♖xf4 ♖xa2 27 ♖xb6 looks like a good endgame but White prefers to keep his attacking options open by preserving his queen.

24...♖xg3 25 ♕xg3 ♔d7



Reeh hopes to walk the king to safety but it is too late.

26 ♗e5 ♕c5+ 27 ♔h2 ♔c6

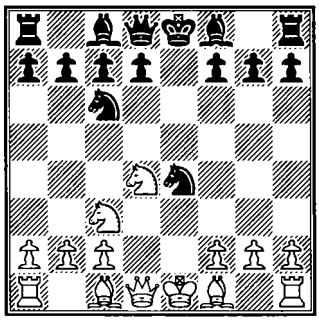
Of course 27...♕xe5 hardly helps due to 28 ♕xe5 when the d-pawn is pinned.

28 ♖xd6+ ♔b5 29 ♗d4 ♕h5 30 ♖xb6+ 1-0

The next twist in the opening is a surprise weapon for Black because if White is not prepared it can consume a lot of time trying to work out the best response. Therefore the following game should make things clearer:

Goldgewicht – Daces
Orange 1994

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘xe4!?



The first time you see this at the board there is the inclination to ask your opponent if he wants to take the move back and play something else. In fact Black can win his piece back at once – admittedly at the cost of weakening his queenside.

6 ♘xe4 ♕e7 7 f3

A precise way of handling the position which has taken some of the excitement out of the variation for Black. In the game Baum-Kotan, Bad Ragaz 1993, White tried 7 ♕d3 but could not secure an advantage after 7...d5 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♗g5 f6 10 0-0-0 (10 ♗e3 dxe4 11 ♕c4 ♕b4+ is equal) 10...fxg5

11 ♘g3 ♔f7 12 ♗e2 g6 13 ♖he1 ♕f6 14 ♕b3 ♗g7 15 c3 ♕f4+ when it was Black who had the better prospects.

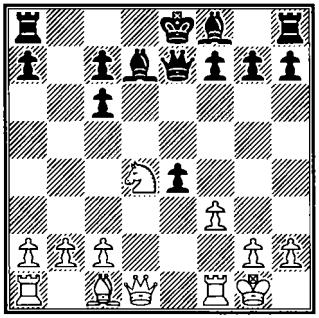
7...d5 8 ♗b5

The pin allows White to castle quickly after doubling the c-pawns.

8...♗d7 9 ♗xc6 bxc6

If 9...♗xc6 then 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 0-0 dxe4 12 fxe4 is greatly inferior to the main game because Black can't castle queenside.

10 0-0 dxe4



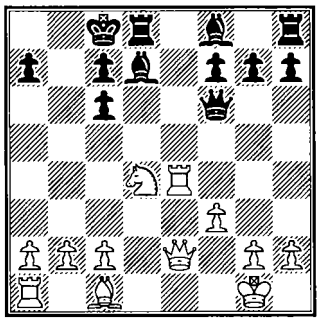
11 fxe4

I quite like this old line because White restores the material balance and is happy to see White's queenside looking rather vulnerable. It also has a certain amount of surprise value because 11 ♖e1 has been heavily analysed:

For example:

a) 11...f5?! 12 fxe4 fxe4 13 c3! c5? and now instead of 14 ♘f5?! as played in Dzindzichashvili-Leveille, New York 1994, White can win easily with 14 ♕h5+! ♕f7 (14...g6 is met by 15 ♕d5 hitting the rook on a8 and the pawn on e4) 15 ♖xe4+ ♗e7 16 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 17 ♗g5+ ♔f8 18 ♖f1 and Black can go home.

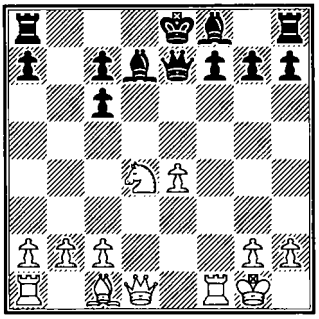
b) 11...0-0-0!? 12 ♖xe4 ♕f6 13 ♕e2



The position looks great for White but Black does have compensation in the form of a decent pair of bishops:

b1) 13...♗c5 14 ♗e3 ♖he8 (this idea was once touted as giving Black the initiative but it is in fact harmless) 15 ♘b3 ♗b6? 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 ♕a6+ ♔b8 18 ♗xc5 1-0 Lengyel-Menyhart, Nyiregyhaza 1994.

b2) 13...c5 14 ♘b3 ♕b6 15 ♗e3 ♗d6 16 ♕f2 f5 17 ♖c4 ♕b5 18 ♖c3 c4 19 ♗c5 ♗c6 20 a4 ♕a6 (20...♗xc5 21 ♕xc5 ♕xc5+ 22 ♘xc5 ♖d4 23 ♖e1 gives White an edge in the ending due to the superior pawn structure) 21 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 22 ♘c5 with a slight plus, Sutovsky-Mikhalevski, Tel Aviv 1994.



11...0-0-0

Black whisks the king away from the centre. The alternatives have given White good practical results:

a) 11...c5!? 12 ♘f5! ♕e6 (12...♗xf5? 13 exf5 ♕f6 14 ♕f3 is good for White for especially after 14...♖d8? 15 ♗g5! ♕xg5 16 ♕c6+ ♖d7 17 ♖fe1+ ♗e7 18 ♖ad1 ♕xf5 19 ♕a8+ ♖d8 20 ♕xd8 mate) 13 ♗f4 0-0-0 14 ♕f3 ♗c6 15 ♘g3 with a slight plus, Carlsson-Johansson, Hallsberg 1999.

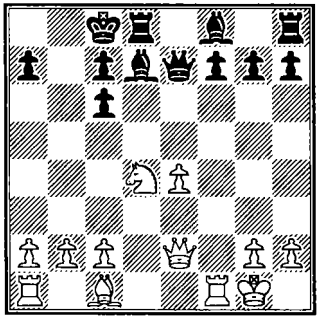
b) 11...g6:

b1) 12 ♗e3!? ♗g7 and now 13 ♘b3!? threatening ♗c5 is worth considering. For example: 13...♗xb2 14 ♗c5 ♕h4!? 15 ♖xf7! ♗g4! (or 15...♔xf7 16 ♕xd7+ ♔g8 17 ♖f1 wins) 16 ♕f1 ♗xa1 17 ♖e7+ ♕xe7 18 ♗xe7 ♗e5 19 ♗h4 ♖f8 20 ♕c4 ♗d7 21 ♗f2 gives White the winning chances due to the exposed black king.

b2) 12 ♗f4 ♗g7 13 c3 0-0 14 ♕d3 c5 15 ♘b3 ♗c6 16 ♖ae1 ♖ab8 17 ♖f2 ♖fe8 18 ♕c4 (White continues to harass the weakened c-pawn) 18...♗b5?! (18...♗f8 is met by 19 ♘a5 with an edge) 19 ♕xc5 when the extra pawn gave White all the chances, Rausis-Payen, Enghien les Bains 1995.

12 ♕e2

The straightforward threat is ♕a6+ to create havoc on the queenside.



12...♕e5

In the game Afek-Van der Marel, Haarlem 2001, Black tried to be clever with 12...♖e8, encouraging an exchange of pawns, but it was misjudged. Play continued 13 ♕a6+ ♔d8 14 ♖d1! and the threat of ♘xc6 mate crushes Black (14 ♘xc6+? ♗xc6 15 ♕xc6 ♕c5+ 16 ♕xc5 ♗xc5+ 17 ♔h1 ♖xe4 with equal chances was the original idea behind the rook move) 14...♕c5 15 ♗e3 (renewing the threat of ♘xc6+) 15...♗d6 16 ♘e6+ ♖xe6 17 ♗xc5 with a win in sight.

13 ♘b3 ♕b5 14 ♕f2

The Frenchman is obviously keen to avoid exchanging queens when there is ample opportunity to create attacking chances against the vulnerable queenside.

14...♗e6 15 ♔h1

Goldgewicht tucks his king out of the way to avoid any annoying checks on the g1-a7 diagonal. 15 ♕xa7? ♗xb3 intending ...♗c5+ is awful for White.

15...♗d6 16 ♗f4

It makes sense to stop any threats associated with ...♕e5 targeting the h2 pawn. Now 16 ♕xa7?? really would be embarrassing after 16...♕xf1+.

16...♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♖d7 18 ♕e3

White is still probing for weaknesses but the main thing is that the doubled c-pawns are still a worry.

18...♕b6 19 ♕c3

As usual in this line White avoids an exchange of queens and now targets the g7 pawn while securing the c5 square for his knight.

19...f6 20 ♘c5 ♖d6 21 e5!

A neat way of opening lines of attack.

21...fxe5 22 ♕xe5 ♗c4?

This ends up losing due to a nice tactic although 22...♖e8 leaves White on top after 23 ♘xe6 ♖dxe6 24 ♕xg7 ♖e2 25 ♖ad1.

23 ♕f5+ ♔d8

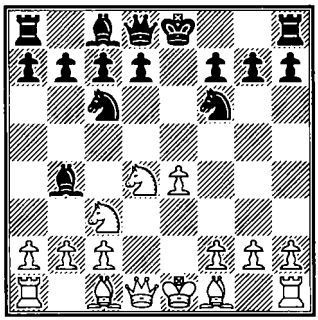
23...♔b8 allows 24 ♕f8+! ♖d8 25 ♘d7+ ♔b7 26 ♘xb6 ♖hxf8 27 ♘xc4 winning.

24 ♕g5+ ♔c8 25 ♕g4+ 1-0

The centre of attention has always revolved around 5...♗b4 which leads to a middlegame battle with potential for a kingside attack:

Berg – I. Sokolov
Malmo 2001

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4



The pin prepares ...♘xe4 and is firmly established as the main line.

6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0

This is the usual move but it is worth knowing what to do if Black wants to avoid the main line:

a) If 7...h6?! to prevent ♗g5 then the slowing down of Black's development is a cause for concern: 8 0-0 and now:

a1) 8...0-0? 9 e5 ♗xc3 (9...♘d5 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♕g4 threatening ♕xb4 and ♗xh6 is winning) 10 bxc3 ♘e8 11 ♕g4 d5 12 ♕g3 ♔h8 13 ♗a3 ♖g8 14 f4 a5 15 f5 with a terrific attack, S.Lalic-Schlander, Battle Abbey 2001.

a2) 8...d6 then 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 ♘d4 ♕e8 11 ♕f3 (the threat is ♗xh6) 11...♗c5 12 c3 ♗xd4?! 13 cxd4 ♗g4 14 ♕g3 ♗h5 15 e5! ♘d5 16 ♗xh6 with a winning advantage, Afek-Keely, Lisbon 2001.

b) 7...d6 8 0-0 ♗g4 9 f3 ♗h5 10 ♘e2 (10 ♘a4 looks good, planning c2-c3 so that White can exchange the bishop) 10...♘d7 11 ♔h1 0-0 12 ♘g3 ♗g6 13 f4 with the initiative, Heidenfeld-Xie, Canberra 2000.

c) 7...d5 8 exd5 ♘xd5 (8...cxd5 9 0-0 transposes to the main game) 9 0-0 ♘xc3 (9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♘xc3? 11 ♕e1+ picks up a piece) 10 ♕e1+ ♕e7 11 bxc3 ♕xe1 12 ♖xe1+ ♗e7 13 ♗e4 gives White excellent play because 13...♗d7?! runs into 14 ♗a3! winning.

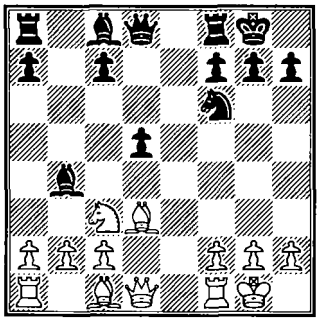
8 0-0 d5

It is usual for Black to contest the centre. A relatively rare move is 8...♖e8 and after 9 ♗g5 play might continue:

a) 9...d5 10 exd5 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 cxd5 12 ♕f3 c6 13 c4 with a slight edge, K.Martin-Nytrova, Aberdeen 2004.

b) 9...h6 10 ♗h4 d5 11 exd5 ♗xc3 12 bxc3 cxd5 13 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 14 ♕xe1 ♗e6 with a roughly equal position where the plan for White might be ♖d1 aiming for c3-c4, as in the game Golubev-Fedorchuk, Ordzhonikidze 2001.

9 exd5 cxd5



At this point both players are close to completing their piece development without any difficulties. White has the superior pawn structure but Black's mobile pawns in the centre cover important squares. A typical idea for White is to challenge Black's central pawns while manoeuvring his pieces to try and create a kingside attack. If 9...♘xd5 then 10 ♘e4 leaves Black with weak doubled c-pawns.

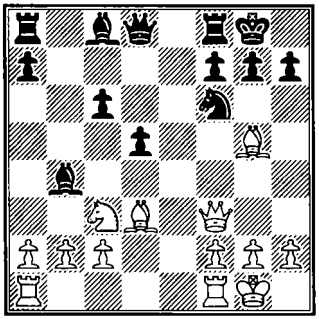
10 ♗g5 c6

The major alternative 10...♗e6 is featured later in the chapter. The reason why 10...♗e7 has a poor record is due to a crafty trick: 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♕h5 and the threat of mate means White must win at least a pawn. For instance: 12...g6 13 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗xb2 15 ♖ab1 ♗e5 16 ♖fe1 ♗d6 (16...f6 17 ♖xe5 fxe5 18 ♘xc7 with the advantage) 17 ♘f6+ ♔g7 18 ♘e8+ gave White an excellent ending, Mazziotti Irigoyen-Goiriz, Posadas 2005.

11 ♕f3

A sharp continuation that puts pressure on the f6 knight. The alternatives 11 ♘e2 and 11 ♘a4 are

discussed in the next couple of games.



11...♗e7

The grandmaster is wary of allowing the f-pawns to be doubled because that would make it very difficult to avoid a draw in a dull ending.

Also possible:

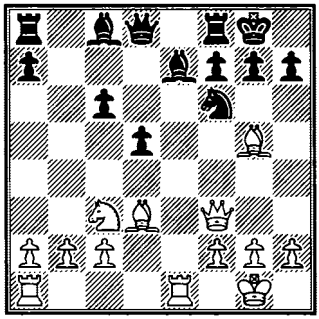
a) 11...♗d6 and now:

a1) 12 ♘e2 h6 (or 12...♗g4 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf3 14 ♗xd8 ♗xe2 15 ♗xe2 ♖fxd8 16 ♖ad1 when the position is level, Skripchenko-Gustafsson, Pulvermuehle 2004) 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♕xf6 gxf6 15 c4 (White jumps at the chance to undermine the central pawns) 15...♗a6 (or 15...dxc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗e5 17 ♖ab1 ♗f5 18 ♖bd1 ♗xb2 19 ♖d6 ♖ac8 20 ♘g3 ♗g6 21 ♖d7 ♖fd8 22 ♖xa7 with a level position, E.Berg-Najer, internet 2004) 16 ♖fd1 dxc4 (or 16 ..♗xc4? allows 17 ♗xc4 dxc4 18 ♖xd6 winning) 17 ♗h7+ ♔xh7 18 ♖xd6 ♖ab8 19 ♖xc6 ♖xb2 20 ♘c3 ♗b7 21 ♖xc4 ♖g8 22 ♘e4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖gb8 24 g3 ½-½ Egin-Van den Doel, Mallorca Olympiad 2004.

a2) 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♕xf6 gxf6 14 ♘e2 ♖b8 15 b3 with equality, Ardeleanu-Kizov, Subotica 2004.

b) 11...h6 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♕xf6 gxf6 14 ♘e2 ♖e8 15 ♘g3 ♗e6 16 ♘h5 ♗e7 17 ♖fe1 ♖ab8 18 b3 ♔f8 19 h3 and a draw was soon agreed in Maharjan-Elarbi, Mallorca Olympiad 2004.

12 ♖fe1



The rook applies pressure to the e-file but is also well placed to take part in an attack – which soon becomes apparent. If you want to follow in the mega byte steps of a computer then you would do well to follow Deep Blue-Kasparov, Philadelphia 1996, where the human world champion could not break down the opening. That game went 12 ♖ae1 ♖e8 13 ♘e2 h6 14 ♗f4 ♗d6 15 ♘d4 ♗g4 16 ♕g3 ♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♕b6 18 c4!? ♗d7 (18...♕xb2 19 ♘xc6 ♕xa2 20 ♘e7+ ♔f8 21 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 22 cxd5 is better for White) 19 cxd5 cxd5 20 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21 ♕d2 ♘e4

22 ♗xe4 dxe4 23 b3 ♖d8 when Kasparov offered a draw but famously it was declined!

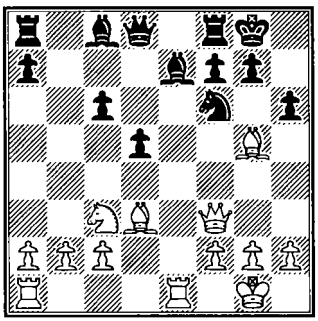
12...h6!?

A risky continuation because it allows White to create tremendous attacking chances. Therefore it is worth checking the alternative 12...♖e8 when play might continue:

13 ♘e2

a) 13 h3 h6 14 ♗f4 ♗e6 (14...♗d6 15 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 17 b3 ½-½ E.Berg-Wedberg, Umea 2003) 15 ♘e2 (or 15 ♖ad1 ♘d7 16 ♕h5 ♘f6 17 ♕f3 ♘d7 18 ♘a4 ♘b6 19 ♘xb6 axb6 20 a3 ♗d6 ½-½ Mueller-Socko, Hamburg 1996) 15...c5 16 ♗b5 ♗d7 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 ♘g3 ♘h7 19 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 20 ♖e5 d4 21 b3 ½-½ E.Berg-Johannessen, Gothenburg 2004.

b) 13 ♘e2 h6 14 ♗f4 ♗d6 15 ♘d4 ♗g4 16 ♕g3 ♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 c5 18 ♘c6 ♕d7 19 ♘e5 ♕d6 20 c4 led to equal chances in Afek-Schoorl, Amsterdam 2004.



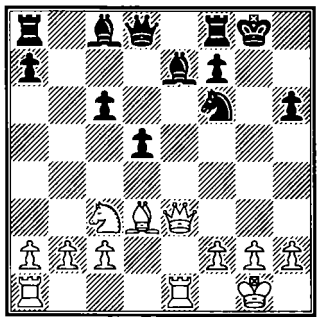
13 ♗xh6!

The start of a sharp attack but if Black is ready and waiting the outcome should be a draw.

13...gxh6

If 13...d4 14 ♘e4 gxh6 then 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 ♕e4 wins.

14 ♕e3



This is the key point because the attack against the bishop means that White will pick up another pawn.

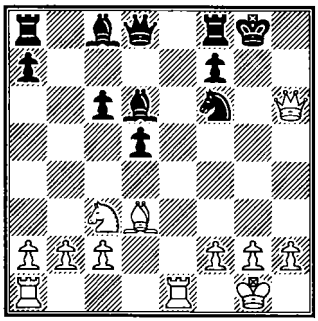
14...♗d6!

There are plenty of opportunities for Black to go wrong:

a) 14...♖e8 15 ♕xh6 ♕d6 (15...♗f8 16 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 [16...♘xe8?? allows 17 ♕h7 mate] 17 ♕xf6 with a winning advantage) 16 ♕g5+ and in the game Vargic-Jukic, Medulin 1997 White was content with the perpetual check but missed the star move 16 ♖e3! preparing to swing the rook across to g3 or h3. For instance: 16...♗g4 17 h3 ♗f8 18 ♕g5+ ♗g7 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20 hxg4 ♕b4 21 ♖b1 ♘xg4 22 a3 ♕d4 23 ♖f1 when White is better.

b) 14...d4 15 ♕xh6 dxc3 (15...♗d6 16 ♖e4! threatening ♖h4 and contemplating winning the brilliancy prize: then if 16...♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♗e7 [17...f6 18 ♕g6+ ♔h8 19 ♘xf6 is deadly] 18 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 19 ♕h7 mate) 16 ♖e5! (as usual in this line the rook needs to aim for the g or h-files) 16...♗f5 17 ♖xf5 ♘g4 (17...♘h7 is met by 18 ♖h5) 18 ♖g5+! ♗xg5 19 ♕h7 mate, Rasmussen-Jessen, Copenhagen 2002.

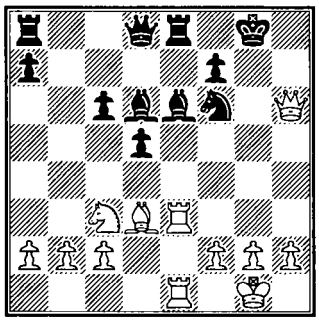
15 ♕xh6



15...♖b8?

Now at first sight it might seem that Sokolov is ignoring his exposed king but the crafty defensive idea is to play ♖b4 and defend across the fourth rank. The only snag is that it is too fancy and simply loses to some powerful tactics. I think if you are going to sacrifice a piece it is worth doing some detailed analysis so you know what to do against the various replies.

a) 15...♗e6? seems a sound choice but White can create a tremendous attack after 16 ♖e3 ♖e8 17 ♖ae1 when Black has problems:



a1) 17...♘g4 allows White all the fun upon 18 ♕h7+ ♔f8 19 ♕h8+ ♔e7 20 ♖xe6+! fxe6 21 ♕g7 mate.

a2) 17...d4 18 ♖e5 ♗xe5 19 ♖xe5 ♗f5 20 ♖xf5 ♖e1+ 21 ♗f1 ♘h7 22 ♖h5 dxc3 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♕h8+ ♔e7 25 ♖e5+ (25 ♕xc3 ♕d1 26 ♖e5+ ♖xe5 27 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 28 ♕f5+ is also good) 25...♖xe5 26 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 27 ♕xc3 with the superior position.

a3) 17...♗f8 18 ♖g3+ ♗g4 19 ♖xg4+ ♘xg4 20 ♕h7 mate.

a4) 17...♗d7 18 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 19 ♖e3 ♗d7 20 ♖f3 which is an echo of the main game and wins comfortably.

b) 15...♖e8 16 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 17 ♗h7+ ♔h8 18 ♗g6+ ♔g8 19 ♕h7+ ♔f8 20 ♕xf7 mate.

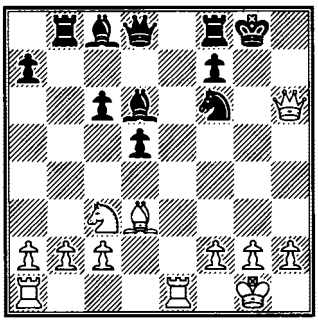
c) 15...♗g4, to block the g-file, was tested in the game Janocha-Socko, Lubniewice 2003, which continued 16 ♕g5+ (16 ♖e3! with the idea of ♖ae1 and then ♖e5 as in the main game needs testing because Black may not be able to survive upon 16...♖b8 17 ♖ae1 intending ♖e5) 16...♔h8 17 ♕h6+ ♔g8 18 ♕g5+ ♔h8 19 ♕h6+ ½-½.

d) Postny has recommended 15...♗d7! when play might continue 16 ♖e3 ♖e8 17 ♖f3 ♘e4 18 ♘xe4 (18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♕xd6 ♕e7 21 ♖g3+ ♔h7 22 ♕d3 ♗f5 and the attack fades away leaving Black to count the pieces) 18...dxe4 19 ♕xd6 exf3 20 ♕h6 ♗e6! (the only way to avoid imminent defeat) 21 ♗h7+ ♔h8 22 ♗e4+ ♔g8 23 gxf3 ♕d4 (or 23...f5 24 ♔h1 ♔f7 25 ♕h7+ ♔f8 is equal) 24 ♔h1 f5 25 ♖g1+ ♔f7 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♗xc6 which is a bit wild but if Black can fend off the attack then he has the better chances due to the extra piece.

16 ♕g5+ ♔h8 17 ♕h4+ ♔g7 18 ♕g5+ ♔h8 19 ♕h6+

It is fairly clear that Berg is saving time on the clock while trying to find the mate.

19...♔g8



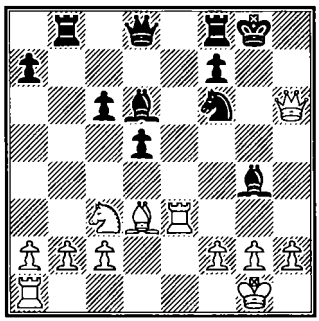
20 ♖e3!

I think anyone familiar with the sacrifice on h6 should have little trouble finding this move which brings the king's rook into the onslaught.

20...♗g4

The original idea of playing 20...♖b4 makes little impression due to 21 ♖f3! undermining the defence of the h7 square when 21...♘e4 22 ♗xe4 dxe4 23 ♖f6! (threatening the bishop and mate) 23...♗e7 24 ♕g5+ ♔h7 25 ♖h6 is mate.

21 ♕g5+ ♔h8 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8



23 ♖ae1!

Now that White has gained more time on the clock he carries on with the winning plan of ♖e5 and bringing a rook to the g-file.

23...♗h5

This fails to stop the attack but the alternatives also offer no resistance: 23...♖xb2 24 ♖e5! ♗xe5 25 ♖xe5 ♘e4 26 ♗xe4 dxe4 27 ♖g5+ ♕xg5 28 ♕xg5+ winning or 23...♘e4 24 ♘xe4 dxe4 25 ♖xe4 ♕d7 26 ♖xg4+ ♕xg4 27 ♕h7 mate.

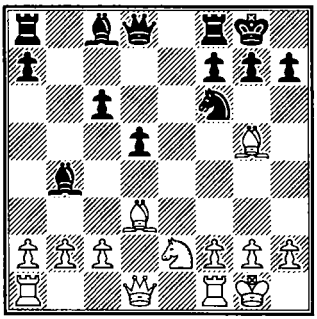
24 ♕g5+ ♔h8 25 ♖h3 1-0

If White is wary of playing a sacrificial line then 11 ♘e2

encouraging a positional approach might be worth a go:

Frolov – Ibragimov
Elista 2001

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 c6 11 ♘e2



The knight drops back to allow c2-c4 and provide the option of ♘d4.

11...h6

Black nudges the bishop so that he can start to break the pin.

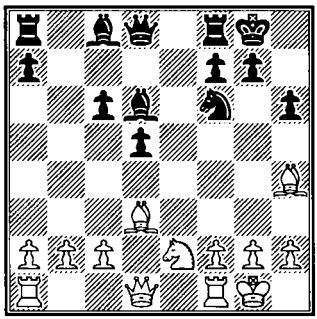
Or 11...♗d6:

a) 12 ♘g3?! h6! 13 ♗d2 ♘g4! 14 ♗e2 (14 h3 ♘xf2 15 ♔xf2 ♕h4 16 ♕f3 f5! intending ...f5-f4 is good for Black) 14...♕h4 15 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 16 ♕c1 ♗e2?! (16...♗e6 looks like a better idea to maintain the harmony of Black's pieces) 17 ♖e1 ♗a6?! 18 ♗c3 led to roughly equal chances in the famous encounter Steinitz-Zukertort, World Championship 1886.

b) 12 ♘d4 ♗c7 (12...c5 13 ♘f5 ♗e5 14 c3 ♗xf5 15 ♗xf5 led to equal chances in Goldgewicht-Marciano, French Team Championships 2001) 13 ♖e1 ♕d6 (well, it is usually a good idea to threaten mate) 14 g3 ♗g4 15 ♕d2 ♖ae8?! 16 ♕c3! ♘e4 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♗f4 ♕d7 19 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 20 ♕xc6 when the extra pawn gives White the brighter prospects, Afek-I.Sokolov, Portoroz 1993.

12 ♗h4 ♗d6

The bishop points towards the kingside and if White is not careful this can help to create a tactic connected with ♗xh2+. It is also possible to break the pin with 12...♗e7. The game Godena-Saric, Solin 2004, continued 13 ♘d4 (the standard idea here because when the knight is dislodged it can come to f5 in an effort to exchange one of Black's bishops) 13...♗d7 14 ♖e1 ♖b8 15 b3 c5 16 ♘f5 ♗xf5 17 ♗xf5 ♖b4 18 ♗g3 with a slight edge.



13 ♘d4

The knight is posted on a useful central square where it can attempt

to undermine the c-pawn. 13 c4? to challenge the d-pawn is simply wrong due to 13...♗xh2+! when 14 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ 15 ♔g3 g5 wins the piece back with advantage. 13 ♔h1 is a waiting move to avoid the trick mentioned in the previous note because 13...♗xh2 is simply met by 14 ♗xf6 winning so when I faced the move my priority was just to carry on activating the black pieces: 13...♖b8 14 b3 c5 15 c3 ♖e8 16 ♕c2 ♗e6 17 ♖ad1 ♖b6 with a level position, Gluzman-Lane, Melbourne 2002.

13...c5

There might be a quick win for White if 13...♗xh2+? is tried here due to 14 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ 15 ♕xg4! when Black loses a piece.

14 ♘f5

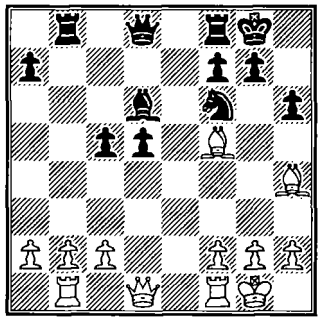
White is content to deprive Black of the bishop pair by seeking an exchange of minor pieces.

14 ♘b5 is also possible but Black can gain time by harassing the queen's knight: 14...♗b8 15 c4 (as usual White challenges the centre) 15...♗b7 16 ♘c3 d4 17 ♘e2 (White has wasted time retreating the knight which has allowed Black's pair of bishops to dominate) 17...♕d6 18 ♗g3 ♕c6 gave Black the initiative, Zifroni-Macieja, Rimavska Sobota 1992.

14...♗xf5 15 ♗xf5 ♖b8

Activating the rook on the open b-file and harassing the b-pawn.

16 ♖b1



16...♖b4!

This odd-looking move is in fact a typical manoeuvre to bring the rook into play. I suspect it might come easily to grandmasters but the average player might struggle to hit upon such an active defence.

17 ♗g3 ♗xg3 18 hxg3 ♕b8

Black has responded well in the middlegame and has a small advantage thanks to his initiative.

19 b3 ♕e5 20 ♕f3 ♖e8

Probably 20...g6 is best met by 21 a3 when 21...♖b6 22 ♗d3, intending c2-c4, is level.

21 a3 ♖d4 22 ♖bd1

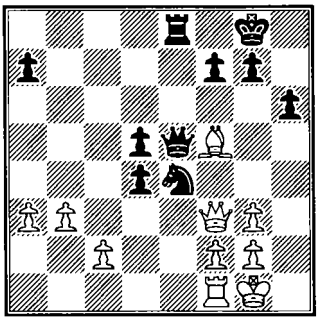
Not 22 b4?, to attack the central pawns, because of 22...g6! 23 c3 ♖c4 24 ♗c2? ♘g4 threatening ...♕h5 with a winning advantage.

22...♘e4

It might be better to try 22...♖xd1 although after 23 ♖xd1 a5 (23...♕e2 24 ♕xe2 ♖xe2 25 ♔f1 is level) 24 ♗d3 it is not clear how Black can make progress.

23 ♖xd4 cxd4

If 23...♕xd4?! 24 ♖d1 ♕e5 25 ♗xe4 dxe4 26 ♕e3 the position is rather dull and a draw can soon be agreed.



24 ♕f4

Frolov wants to enter the ending because he is wary of allowing Black to dictate the play. This is because ...g7-g6 encourages a capture on e4, unravelling the central pawns, while a retreat of the bishop to the edge of the board on h3 would cut it out of the action.

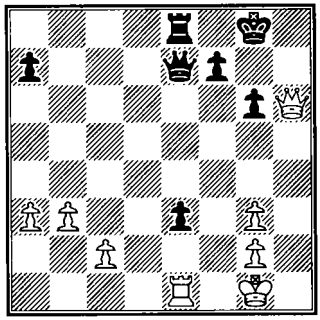
24...♕e7 25 ♖e1 g6!

Or 25...♕xa3 26 ♗xe4 (26 f3? is met by 26...♕a5! when 27 ♖e2 ♕a1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕d1 wins) 26...dxe4 27 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 28 ♕xe4 with equal chances.

26 ♗xe4 dxe4 27 ♕xh6 e3?

Maybe Black should take his time and restore material parity first by 27...♕xa3! when after 28 ♕f4 ♕e7 29 ♖d1 ♕c5 he has good winning chances. For instance: 30 ♕d2 e3 31 fxe3 dxe3 32 ♕e2 with superior prospects.

28 fxe3 dxe3



29 ♔h2

The king gets out of the way so that White can threaten to take on e3 if Black grabs the a-pawn. The difference can be seen upon 29 ♖e2? ♕xa3 and White cannot play 30 ♖xe3 because after 30...♕c1+ 31 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ 32 ♔f1 ♕f5+ Black has a clear advantage.

29...♕c5

Or 29...e2 30 b4 ♕f6 31 ♕f4 ♕c3 32 ♕f2 ♕xc2 33 ♕xa7 ♕d2 34 ♕f2 when a draw is the likely result because White will advance the queenside pawns, force Black to defend and then capture the e-pawn.

30 ♖e2 ♖e4 31 a4 a5 32 ♕h3 ♕c7 33 ♕h6 ♕d8 34 ♕h3

The position is level because White has to constantly guard against the advance of the e-pawn. Then again, 34 ♖xe3?? would change matters upon 34...♕d2 when White can go home.

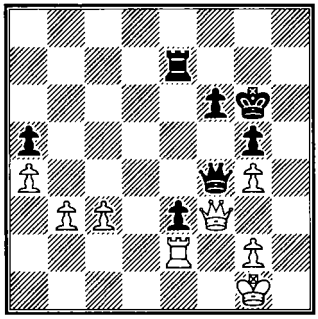
34...♔g7 35 g4 ♖e8 36 ♕g3 ♕d4 37 ♔g1 ♖e4 38 ♕f3 ♖e6

If 38...♖xg4 then 39 ♕xe3 is actually better for White due to the extra pawn.

39 ♕g3 ♖e4 40 ♕f3 ♖e5 41 ♕g3 g5

If 41...♕d1+ then 42 ♕e1 is equal.

42 ♕f3 ♔g6 43 ♕c6+ ♖e6 44 ♕f3 ♕e5 45 ♖e1 ♖e7 46 ♖e2 f6 47 ♖e1 ♕f4 48 ♖e2 ♖e5 49 c3 ♖e7



50 ♕xf4?

In a mad moment Frolov, preoccupied with thoughts of a rapid queenside pawn advance, throws away the draw. 50 ♔f1 is just equal

50...gxf4 51 ♔f1

51 b4 is met by 51...♖e4 which slows down the advance of the pawns.

51...♖c7 52 ♖c2 ♔g5 53 c4 ♔xg4

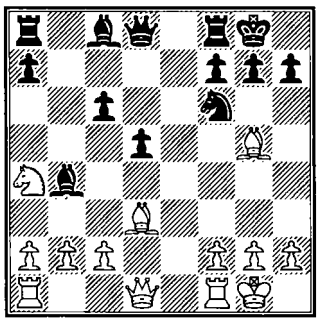
The active black king and far advanced black pawns decide the game.

54 c5 f3 55 ♖c4+ ♔g3 56 gxf3 ♔xf3 57 c6 ♖h7! 58 ♔g1 ♖g7+ 59 ♔h2 e2 0-1

A modern twist in the main line is 11 ♘a4 which has really caught on amongst the top players and is the reason why the Four Knights is still regarded as a menace by Black.

Bergez – Fairbairn
Geneva 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♗g5 c6 11 ♘a4!?



This idea became very popular in the 1990s because it added a new twist in an old line. The basic idea is to restrict Black's queenside activity by fixing the c and d-pawns on their present squares. This will then give White an opportunity to create attacking chances on the kingside.

11...h6

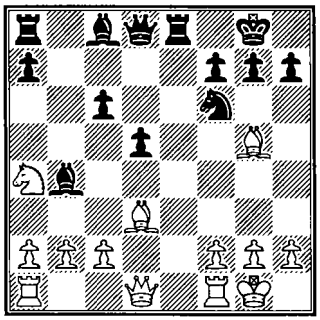
Black pushes back the bishop so that later there is the option of breaking the pin with ...g7-g5.

Other options:

a) 11...♕d6 12 c3 ♘g4 13 g3 ♗a5 14 ♖e1 ♗d8 15 ♗f4 ♕f6 led to equal chances in Emms-Sadler, British Team Championship (4NCL) 1998.

b) 11...♗d6 12 c4 (or 12 ♖e1 ♗e6 13 c3 ♖e8 14 ♗c2 h6 15 ♗h4 ♗e7 16 ♗g3 ♗d6 17 ♕d3 with ambitions of attack along the b1-h7 diagonal, Hamdouchi-Foisor, Montpellier 1996) 12...♖b8 13 ♖e1 h6 14 ♗h4 ♗e6 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♖c1 ♖b4 17 ♗g3 ♗xg3 18 hxg3 ♘g4 19 b3 with equal chances, Spassky - Xie Jun, Roquebrune 1998.

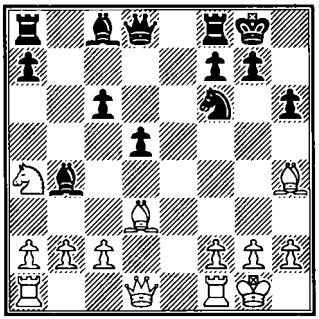
c) 11...♖e8



c1) 12 c3 ♗d6 13 ♔h1 h6 14 ♗h4 ♗f4 15 b4 (as usual White does his best to stop the advance of Black's central pawns) 15...♕d6 16 ♗g3 ♗g4 17 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 18 ♕c1 ♕d6 19 f3 ♗h5 20 ♕d2 ♘d7 21 ♖fe1 led to equal opportunities in Hamdouchi - Narciso Dublan, French Team Championship 2000.

c2) 12 c4, challenging the d5 pawn, is possible: 12...♗d6 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♘c3 ♗b7 15 ♕d2 h6 16 ♗f4 with some play against the d-pawn although the chances should still be level, Predescu-Krnan, Toronto 2004.

12 ♗h4



12...♗e7

Black unpins the knight but there are other possibilities:

a) 12...♗d6 and now:

a1) 13 c3 ♖e8 14 b4 (this theme of fixing Black's centralised pawns can also be seen in the main game) 14...♗e5 15 ♖e1 a5 16 a3 axb4 17 axb4 ♗g4 18 ♕c2 led to equal chances in Mannion-Timman, Elista 1998.

a2) 13 ♖e1 ♗d7 14 c3 ♖e8 15 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 16 ♕f3 (maybe 16 b4!? to stop the c6 pawn from advancing) 16...c5 17 ♗c2 ♖b8 with roughly equal chances, Degraeve-Lane, Parthenay 1992.

b) 12...♖e8 13 c4 ♗e6 14 ♖c1 ♖b8 15 cxd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗c4!? ♗d6 17 b3 ♗f4 (or 17...♗e5 18 ♗xd5 cxd5 19 ♖c5 g5 20 ♗g3 ♕d6 21 ♕c2 led to roughly equal

chances in Lautier-Campos Moreno, Manila Olympiad 1992) 18 ♖c3 ♗e5 19 ♖c2 ♕d6 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xd5 cxd5 22 ♘c5 ♗e5 23 g3 and though White has some play against the d-pawn the position is equal, Nakamura-Karjakin, Cuernavaca 2004.

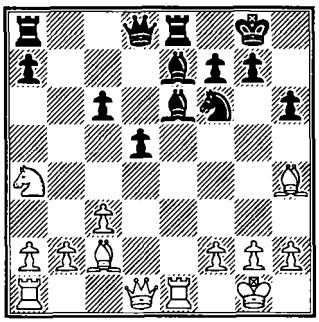
13 ♖e1 ♗e6 14 c3

White relies on a tried and tested formula of stopping Black's c and d-pawns from advancing.

14...♖e8

It is worth noting that a pawn advance in the centre is currently ruled out as a safe option: 14...d4? 15 cxd4 ♕xd4?? 16 ♗h7+ wins. There is also not much to recommend 14...c5? 15 ♗xf6! gxf6 (15...♗xf6 allows 16 ♘xc5 winning a pawn) 16 ♕h5 ♔g7 17 ♖xe6! when Black can resign.

15 ♗c2



15...g5?!

It is understandable that Black is fed up with the attentions of the dark-squared bishop but advancing the g-pawn seriously weakens his defensive barrier.

a) 15...♘d7 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♕d3 g6 (17...♘f6 18 ♕d4 intending ♘c5 when 18...♘d7 19 f4 g6 20 ♖e2 gives White the initiative) 18 ♖e2 ♕g5 19 ♖ae1 ♘f6 20 ♕d4 ♗g4 and now instead of 21 f4 securing a slight advantage in Hamdouchi-Canal Oliveras, Sitges 1995, White should have played 21 h4! when 21...♕xh4 22 f3 ♕xe1+ 23 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 24 ♔f2 ♖ae8 25 ♕xf6 confirms the advantage.

b) 15...♖b8?! 16 ♕d4 a5 17 ♖e3 (White is doing a good job of reinforcing the attack by bringing more pieces into the action) 17...♕c7 18 ♖ae1 c5 19 ♕d3 g5? (perhaps an echo of the main game where Black also weakens his pawn barrier – so 19...♔f8 should be considered) 20 ♗g3 ♗d6 21 ♖xe6! 1-0 Lautier-Sokolov, Correze 1992.

16 ♗g3 ♗d6 17 b4

An important theme in the variation with 11 ♘a4 – White does his best to fix the c and d-pawns.

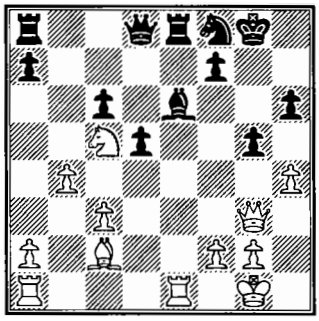
17...♕d7 18 ♕d4 ♘h7

If 18...♔g7 then 19 ♘c5 ♕e7 20 ♘e4! with the better chances.

19 ♕d3 ♘f8 20 h4

Bergez makes an effort to undermine the kingside. Instead 20 ♗xd6 is worth checking out to secure the c5 square for his knight after 20...♕xd6 21 ♘c5 and gain the brighter prospects.

20...♗xg3 21 ♕xg3 ♕d8 22 ♘c5



The opening strategy has worked well and it translates into a promising middlegame as White's knight has landed on the coveted c5 square and his kingside attack is strong.

22...♖c8?

Fairbairn cracks under the pressure and allows a tactic which leads to a further deterioriation of his position.

23 ♘b7 ♕f6 24 ♘d6

The knight fork wins the exchange after which White's material advantage is decisive.

24...♖ed8 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 hxg5 hxg5

If 26...♕xg5 then 27 ♕d3 maintains the pressure.

27 ♖e5 g4 28 ♖ae1 c5 29 b5 d4 30 a4 ♖d8 31 ♖xc5 1-0

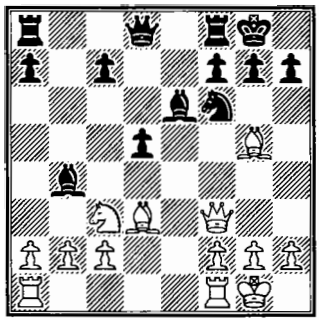
There is another way of defending the d-pawn and that is by 10...♗e6. There are various established replies so White can choose which one suits him. The first game features a direct approach and ends with a stylish draw.

Magem Badals – Torrecillas Martinez
Andorra 1999

1 e4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 ♗e6!?

The bishop supports the d5 pawn thereby introducing the possibility of forming a mobile centre with a timely ...c7-c5.

11 ♕f3



The queen puts pressure on the king's knight but this line has a fairly harmless reputation.

11...♗e7 12 ♖ae1

This is established as the main line in which White is happy to continue improving the positions of his pieces in anticipation of a middlegame fight. However, there are other possibilities too:

a) 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘a4 h6 14 ♗f4 ♕d7 15 b3 ♖bc8 16 ♗e5 ♕d8 17 ♗a6 ♖b8 18 ♕c3 ♗d6 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♕xf6 gxf6 21 ♖ad1 led to equal chances because it is difficult for White to exploit the doubled f-pawns, Parma - De Coverly, Coventry 2005.

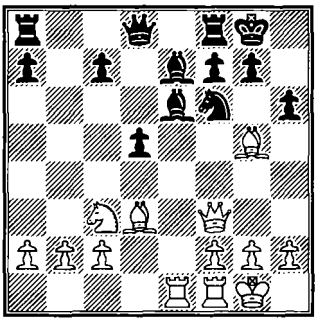
b) 12 ♖fe1 and now:

b1) 12...c5 13 ♗f5 ♖b8 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 ♕e2 ♖b6 16 ♖ad1 ♖f7 17 b3 ♗d6 18 ♘a4, intending c2-c4, is level, Eggleston-Mitchell, Durham 2002.

b2) 12...h6 13 ♗h4 c6 14 ♘e2 c5 15 ♘f4 (if in doubt putting pressure on the e-file is a good idea although the knight usually belongs on d4) 15...♕d7 16 ♕e2 ♖fe8? (oh dear!) 17 ♗b5 1-0 Yilmaz-Kuehnl, Hessen 1991.

b3) 12...♕d7 13 h3 ♖ab8 14 b3 h6 15 ♗h4 ♖b4! (this activation of the queen's rook is a common theme in this variation) 16 ♗g3 c5 17 ♖ad1 ♗d6 18 a3 ♖bb8 19 ♗h4 gave White the initiative in Eggleston-C.Edwards, Durham 2002.

12...h6



Black would like to dislodge the bishop from the g5 square and force it to retreat or exchange on f6.

Other moves:

a) 12...♖b8 13 ♖e5?! (White offers a pawn in the hope of trapping the rook but 13 ♘d1 is wiser when 13...c5 14 c3 ♕d7 is equal) 13...♖xb2 14 ♘b5 c5 15 ♗c1 ♖b4 16 ♗d2 ♖a4 17 ♘c3 ♖a3 18 ♘b5 ♖a6 gave Black the advantage thanks to his extra pawn, A.R.B.Thomas-Lane, Paignton 1981.

b) 12...c6 13 ♘a4 ♘d7 (13...c5? allows 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘xc5 ♗xb2 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♕h3 and White wins a pawn) 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 ♕f4 ♖ab8 16 b3 ♘c5 17 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♖e3 with equal opportunities, Landenbergue-Bucher, Geneva 2001.

13 ♗xh6!?

At a glance this seems to be a prelude to an enthusiastic attack but grandmasters like Magen Badals in fact use it as a way to force a draw. Of course, there are other ways to keep the game going:

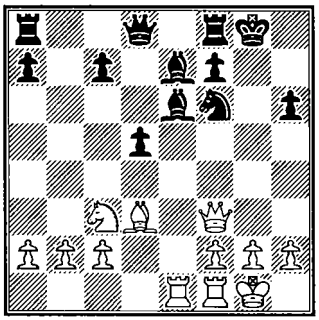
a) 13 ♗h4 ♖b8 14 ♘d1 c5 15 ♗f5 ♕d7 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♕e3 (as usual in this line White exploits the e-file to increase the pressure) 17...♖b6 18 ♕d3 ♕a4 with the better chances, Czerniak-Lynch, La Plata 1944.

b) 13 ♗c1 is a reasonable idea now that the queen's rook has been centralised:

b1) 13...c6 14 h3 ♖e8 15 ♖e2 (15 ♘e2 intending ♘d4 or ♘f4 is worth considering) 15...♗d6 16 ♖fe1 ♖b8 17 ♘d1 ♖b7 18 c3 ♗d7 ½-½ Pogats-Tompa, Budapest 1966.

b2) 13...c5 14 ♗f5 ♗xf5 15 ♕xf5 ♖b8 16 ♖d1 (perhaps 16 ♖e2 should be considered) 16...d4 17 ♘e4 ♘xe4 18 ♕xe4 led to a level position in Pilnik-Euwe, Mar del Plata 1947.

13...gxh6



14 ♖xe6!

An essential sacrifice to force a perpetual check.

14...fxe6 15 ♕g3+ ♔h8 16 ♕g6

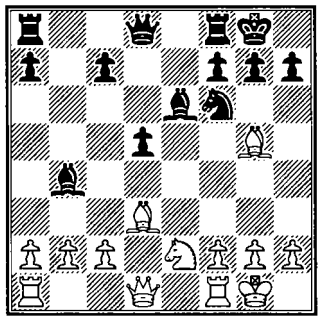
The queen invades the heart of Black's position but without reinforcements there is no mate in sight.

16...♕e8 17 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 18 ♕g5+ ♔h8 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 ♕g5+ ♔h8 21 ♕h6+ ♔g8 ½-½

There is another option for White in the form of 11 ♘e2.

Godena – Iordachescu
FIDE World Championship,
New Delhi/Teheran 2000

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♗g5 ♗e6!? 11 ♘e2



The knight retreats in order to relocate to d4 or f4 after which White will station a rook on the e-file in an effort to provoke Black.

11...h6

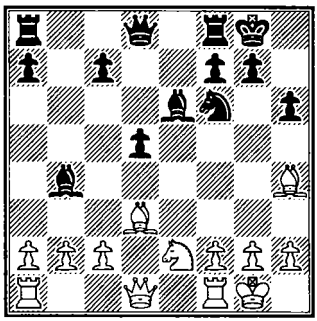
Instead 11...♗d6 allows White to stir up trouble by 12 ♘d4 c5 (12...♗d7 13 ♖e1 h6 14 ♗h4 is level) and now:

a) 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 c4 ♗e5 15 ♕e2 ♕d6 16 f4 ♗d4+ 17 ♔h1 ♖ab8 18 ♖ab1 led to equal chances in J.Polgar-Salov, Madrid 1993.

b) 13 ♘c6! commences a clever combination designed to rip open Black's kingside pawn barrier: 13...♕c7 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 (or 14...♕xc6 15 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16 ♕h5+ ♔g8 17 ♕g5 leads to mate) 15 ♕h5 f5 16 ♕g5+ ♔h8 17 ♕f6+ (this might be a stylish way to draw but here White wants more!)

17...♔g8 18 f4! ♕xc6 19 ♖f3 ♖fe8 20 ♕h6 ♗xf4 21 ♖xf4 c4! (21...♗d7? fails because of 22 ♖g4+! fxg4 23 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 24 ♗g6+ ♔g8 25 ♕h7+ ♔f8 26 ♕xf7 mate) 22 ♕g5+ ♔h8 23 ♕f6+ ♔g8 24 ♗xf5 with a powerful attack, Tsekouras-Kalaitzoglou, Aghia Pelagia 2004.

12 ♗h4



12...♗c5

Another popular plan is to try and stifle White's projected knight manoeuvre:

a) 12...♗g4 and now:

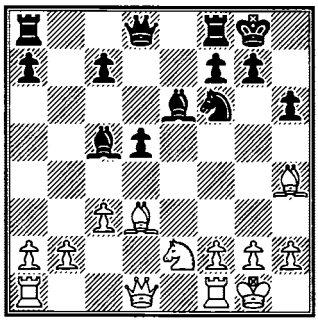
a1) 13 h3 ♗h5 14 c3 ♗d6 15 ♕c2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 ♖e8 17 ♕f3 ♖b8 (17...♗e7 to block the pin is revealed as an error upon 18 ♗b5 ♖f8 19 ♖ad1 with strong pressure against the d5 pawn) 18 b3 ♗e5 19 ♖ac1 led to an equal position in Tal-Antoshin, Tbilisi 1956.

a2) 13 f3 ♗c5+ 14 ♔h1 ♗e6 15 c3 a5 (15...♗d6 16 ♘d4 c5 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♕e2 ♖e8 19 f4! with a slight edge) 16 ♘d4 aiming to play ♖e1 with a small advantage, Santo Roman-Neiman, Narbonne 1997.

a3) 13 c3 ♗d6 14 ♕c2 ♖e8 15 ♖fe1 ♗e5 16 ♗b5 ♗d7 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 ♖ad1 with some pressure against the d5 pawn, Rublevsky-Galdunts, Kurgan 1994.

b) 12...♗d6 13 ♘d4 c5 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♕e2 e5 16 ♗g6!? ♖b8 17 c4 e4 18 ♖ad1 ♕c7 19 ♔h1 dxc4 (of course 19...♗xh2? fails to 20 g3 trapping the bishop) 20 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 21 ♗xe4 ♗e5 22 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 23 b3 when the extra pawn gave White the advantage in Salov-Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1991.

13 c3



White secures the d4 square for his knight and prepares b2-b4 to harass the bishop and gain more space on the queenside. Maybe 13 ♘f4 should be tested. For instance:

a) 13...♖e8?! 14 ♗b5 ♖f8 15 c4! gives White the initiative.

b) 13...♖b8 14 b3 ♖e8 15 ♕f3 with roughly equal chances.

c) 13...♗d6 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 c4 c6 16 ♕e2 with an approximately

level game) 14 b3 ♖e8 15 ♕f3 aiming to play c2-c4 with advantage.

13...a5

Black stops b2-b4 which White might exploit to harass the bishop and stop the central pawns from being mobilised. In the game Gashimov-Nakamura, Menorca 1996, Black tried 13...♖b8 which allowed White to give a demonstration of how a queenside pawn advance can gain space: 14 b4 ♗e7 (14...♗b6 15 a4 a5 16 ♖b1 with an edge) 15 ♘d4 ♕d7 16 ♕e2 (on the e- le he queen exerts pressure on e6 which is normal but there is also the possibility of ♗b5) 16...♖b6 17 a4 g5 18 ♗g3 c5 19 a5 cxd4?! (if 19...♖b7 then 20 ♗b5 increases the pressure) 20 axb6 axb6 21 cxd4 ♗xb4 22 ♕b2 with a winning advantage.

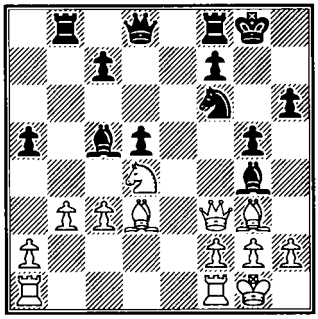
14 ♘d4 ♗d7 15 ♕f3 ♖b8

If 15...g5 16 ♗g3 ♗g4 17 ♗xc7 (or 17 ♕e3 ♖e8 18 ♕d2 leads to equal opportunities but at least Black has weakened his kingside pawns) 17...♗xf3 18 ♗xd8 ♗xd4 19 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20 gxf3 ♖ab8 21 ♖ab1 with equal chances.

16 b3

16 ♗xf6 seems to win material on 16...♕xf6 17 ♕xd5 but Black fights back with 17...♗xd4 (17...♗d6 18 b3 is better due to the extra pawn) when a sample line is 18 cxd4 ♗e6! 19 ♕xa5 ♕xd4 20 ♖fd1 ♕xb2 21 ♕xc7 ♗xa2 leading to a level position.

16...g5 17 ♗g3 ♗g4



18 ♕e3

The tempting 18 ♗xc7? wins a pawn but loses a lady after 18...♕xc7 19 ♕xf6 ♖b6 20 ♘b5 ♕b8 when the white queen has nowhere to hide.

18...♖e8 19 ♕c1 ♖b6

The rook guards against ♘c6 and is ready to transfer to the kingside as part of a defensive strategy. Instead 19...♕d7?! is a slip since then 20 h4 is strong because compared to the game ...♘h5 is useless without the queen defending the g5 pawn.

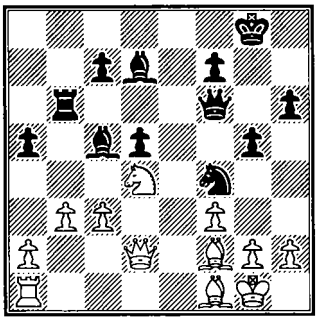
20 f3

The bishop is pushed back and at the same time Black is prevented from occupying the e4 square with the knight. 20 h4? lacks bite due to 20...♘h5! 21 ♗h2 gxh4 with an edge for Black because his position is held together by the queen's rook which defends the h6 pawn.

20...♗d7 21 ♗f2 ♘h5 22 ♖e1

The black knight is heading for f4 so White makes room for the light-squared bishop to retreat to safety.

22...♘f4 23 ♗f1 ♖xe1 24 ♕xe1 ♕f6 25 ♕d2



25...♖b8!

The rook has done its job and is now ready to move over to the e-file before White can dominate it with ♖e1.

26 ♖e1 ♖e8 27 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 28 g3 ♘g6 29 ♗e2 ♘e5 30 f4 gxf4 31 ♕xf4 ♕xf4 32 gxf4 ♘g6 33 ♗e3 ♗d6

Or 33...♗d7 34 ♗f3 c6 35 ♔f2 with a level ending.

34 ♘f5 ♗xf4 35 ♘e7+ ♔g7 36 ♘xd5 ♗xe3+ ½-½

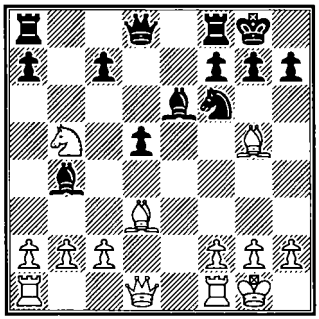
I think the best of the bunch to extract an advantage from the opening is 11 ♘b5.

Egin – Ibragimov
Seversk 1997

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 d5 8 exd5 0-0!? 9 0-0

White ignores the opportunity to deviate from the main line as 9 dxc6 allows Black to take the initiative by 9...♖e8+ 10 ♗e3 ♘g4.

9...cxd5 10 ♗g5 ♗e6 11 ♘b5!



I think this is the move that has really made people lose faith in 10...♗e6. The knight makes way for the c-pawn to advance and gets ready to occupy the d4 square – which is similar to the idea behind 11 ♘e2, the difference being that it can also help to initiate some tactics in the main line.

11...c5

The consistent move to keep guard on the d4 square and threaten ...c5-c4 to push back the light-squared bishop. In the game Hamdouchi-Pijuan, Castellar 1996, Black tried 11...♗e7 when White brought the knight into the action with 12 ♘d4. There then followed 12...♕d7 (perhaps 12...♕d6 is slightly safer to avoid a future ♗b5 which can be irritating) 13 ♖e1 ♖ab8 14 ♕e2 (this plan of piling up pressure on the e-file should be imitated!) 14...♖b6 15 ♗b5 c6 16 ♗a4 ♘e4? 17 ♗xc6! ♖xc6

18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘xc6 with a clear advantage.

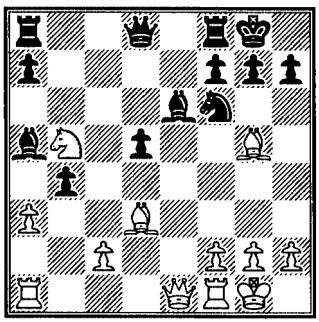
12 a3 ♗a5 13 b4 cxb4

Black is happy to accept the pawn offer. Or 13...♗b6 14 c3 and now:

a) 14...h6 15 ♗h4 ♖e8?! 16 bxc5 ♗xc5 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 (17...♕xf6 allows White to fork the rooks with 18 ♘c7) 18 ♘d4 ♕d6 when Black's shattered kingside is a cause for concern, El Kalyouby-Paronjan, Tula 2000.

b) 14...♖c8 15 bxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♘d4 ♗e7 17 ♖e1 ♖xc3 18 ♖xe6 fxe6 19 ♘xe6 ♕b6 20 ♘xf8 ♗xf8 21 ♗c2 (21 ♗f5!? might be an improvement) 21...♗c5 22 ♔h1 ♕d6 23 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 24 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♖b1 with the initiative, Svidler-Purgin, St Petersburg 1993.

14 ♕e1!



This crafty move, offering the a-pawn, gives White the initiative. The real test is to accept the gambit by

14...bxa3

Also possible is 14...♕b8!? 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 axb4 (maybe 16 ♕e3!? should be tested, e.g. 16...♔g7 17 axb4 and if 17...♗xb4 then 18 ♖a4 is a bright idea to prepare to swing the rook across to the kingside: 18...a5 19 c3 ♗e7 20 ♖h4 with an excellent attack) 16...♗b6 17 ♕d2 ♕e5 18 ♕h6 f5 19 ♘d6 ♗c7 20 ♖ae1 ♕xd6 21 ♕g5+ ♔h8 ½-½ Frolov-Skatchkov, St Petersburg 1998.

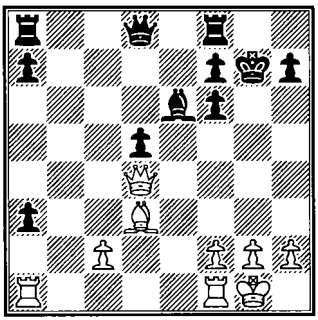
15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♕e3 ♗b6 17 ♘d4!

It seems madness to allow the knight to be pinned. Instead 17 ♕h6 f5 18 ♖xa3 ♔h8 19 ♘d6! gave White the initiative in Yakovich-Ernst, Gausdal 1991 because 19...♕xd6? runs into 20 ♗xf5 winning.

17...♗xd4

Black is already under immense pressure on the weakened kingside, for example 17...♖e8? fails to 18 ♕h6! ♗xd4 19 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 20 ♖xa3 winning.

18 ♕xd4 ♔g7



19 ♖xa3

White regains a pawn and prepares to transfer the rook to the kingside for the attack.

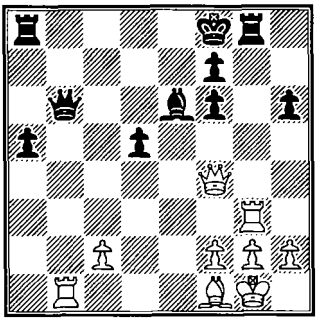
19...♕b6 20 ♕h4 h6 21 ♖fa1 a5 22 ♕g3+

Instead 22 ♗f1 is met by 22...♗f5 blocking the g-file so White embarks on a little dance with the queen to eliminate this option.

22...♔h8 23 ♕f4 ♔g7 24 ♗f1

The bishop retreat allows White to increase the pressure by bringing the rook into the fray.

24...♖g8 25 ♖g3+ ♔f8 26 ♖b1



26...♕d8?

It is difficult to cope with the pressure but defending the f-pawn does not really help matters. 26...♕c6 27 ♖b8+ (or 27 ♕xf6?! ♖xg3 28 hxg3 with equal chances) 27...♖xb8 28 ♕xb8+ ♗c8 29 ♗b5 ♕c5 (29...♕xc2 allows 30 ♕d6 mate) 30 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 31 ♗a6 wins. Instead 26...♕xb1? allows mate by 27 ♕d6+ ♔e8 28 ♖xg8.

27 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 28 ♖b7+

A forcing variation that allows White to win in spectacular fashion.

28...♔d6 29 ♖xg8 ♕xg8 30 ♕f4+ ♔c5 31 ♖c7+ ♔b6 32 ♕d6 mate

Conclusion

The Four Knights is a reliable variation which aims to give Black problems in the middlegame usually by instigating a kingside attack. The early deviations by Black tend to give White the initiative and for good reason are rare yet still attract top players who want to avoid main lines. I suspect that if Black is adequately prepared he will emerge from the opening with equal chances, leaving the real struggle for the advantage to take place in the middlegame.

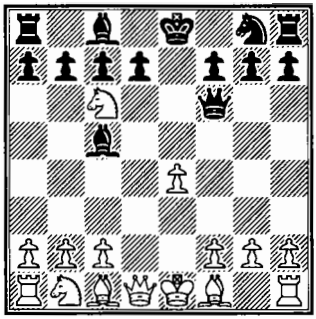
The desire to avoid the well-established main line makes 4...♗c5 attractive for some and **Senff – Reeh** features a continuation where Black attacks in the opening. Perhaps 10...g5 is too risky and White eventually triumphs. **Goldgewicht – Daces** is an important line because 5...♘xe4 has been recommended in a couple of books as a way of surprising White. I like 11 fxe4 which is slightly different from the standard 11 ♖e1 if only to confuse Black who will probably not know it as well. **Berg – I.Sokolov** explores the main line with 10...c6. In this case 11 ♕f3 is used to try and further White's cause and helped by a terrific kingside attack he emerges victorious. Another approach with 11 ♘e2 is the subject of the game

Frolov – Ibragimov with the knight heading for the d4 square. Black responds well and 16...♖b4 is a typical defensive theme in this variation. Perhaps the best line features 11 ♘a4 and the game **Bergez – Fairbairn** certainly demonstrates how easy it is for Black to go wrong and subsequently come under pressure from a kingside attack. The d5 pawn can also be defended with 10...♗e6 inviting White to respond in a variety of ways. The game **Magem Badals – Torrecillas Martinez** sees 11 ♕f3 and deals with a wild way to draw by repetition. Of course a more measured response is also given for those who want to maintain the tension without sacrificing a piece. **Godena – Iordachescu** is another encounter dealing with 10...♗e6 where 11 ♘e2 is employed to bring the queen's knight to a superior outpost. It involves a typical middlegame struggle with chances for both sides. I like 11 ♘b5 to instigate some complications and **Egin – Ibragimov** confirms that here White has plenty of attacking opportunities.

Kasparov Variation:

4...♗c5 5 ♘xc6

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6



History

The idea 5 ♘xc6 has experienced turbulent fluctuations in popularity because the reply 5....♕f6 has had such a good reputation ever since Black won with it in the game Schallopp-Riemann, Leipzig 1879. This seemed to demonstrate that Black could equalise comfortably and White players, apart from a small but loyal following, kept away from the line for some time. However after Kasparov's use of the Scotch in the 1990 World Championship match more players started examining old lines and Smagin in particular added to the theory of this variation. Then the major breakthrough came in the Kasparov-Short World Championship match in London 1993 where Garry employed the line a couple of times and changed public opinion. His key move 8 ♘a4 is explored in the annotated games which confirm White's good record with the variation.

Basic Plan for White

White defends against the threat of mate by ♕d2 which seems merely to block in the dark-squared bishop but in fact has served White well. A typical set-up would be ♘c3, ♗d3 and perhaps kingside castling. The option of ♕f4 or ♕g5 to exchange queens is an important idea because the ending will allow White to use his kingside pawn majority to advantage. Kasparov's seal of approval has been given to 8 ♘a4 which is extensively analysed in the majority of the main games.

Basic Plan for Black

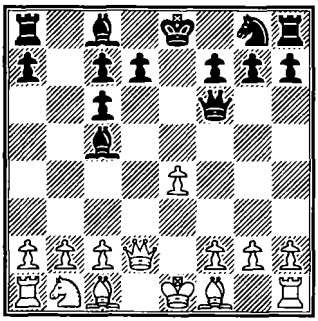
After White has defended the threat of mate Black tends to

recapture the knight by ...dxc6 to allow the queen's rook to come to d8. This is coupled with ....♘e7 followed by castling kingside. A lot of the lines have been extensively analysed and Black often has to defend an ending where White tries to exploit his kingside pawn majority to create a passed pawn.

In the first game I use the Kasparov Variation to provoke some complications:

Lane – Azarov
Bled Olympiad 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6 6 ♕d2 bxc6!?



This move is considered a side-variation, but has become increasingly popular in recent years as a way to avoid the main line.

7 ♘c3

I am happy to get on with developing the pieces. There is some debate whether the move-order is important because if the queens are exchanged by ♕f4 or ♕g5 then the queen's knight can be developed via d2. 7 ♗d3 has been tested but it usually transposes to normal lines although there is scope for individual play. Then 7...♘h6:

a) 8 ♕f4 ♕xf4 9 ♗xf4 ♘g4 (or 9...d6 10 ♗xh6 gxh6 11 ♘d2 gives White a slight edge due to the doubled h-pawns) 10 0-0 d6 11 ♘d2 a5 12 ♘c4 f6 13 ♗e2 ♗e6 14 ♗d2 a4 15 h3 ♘e5 16 ♘e3 led to equal play in Kurajica-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 2001.

b) 8 ♘c3 d6 9 ♘a4 ♗b6 10 0-0 0-0 (10...♘g4 is met by 11 ♘xb6 axb6 12 f4 with a slight initiative) 11 ♔h1 ♕h4 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 f3 f5?! (maybe 13...♗e6 needs to be considered in order to complete his development) 14 ♕c3! c5 15 b3 (intending to accelerate the attack with a queenside fianchetto) 15...♗e6 (15...♕f6 to avoid the attack is not convincing because of White's well-placed pieces in the ending: 16 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♗b2 ♖f8 18 ♖fe1 ♗d7 19 ♗c4+ ♔h8 20 e5 gives White the superior chances) 16 ♗b2 ♖f7 17 exf5! ♘xf5 18 ♖fe1 ♘d4 19 ♕d2 ♗d5 20 ♗e4 with an edge, Ni Hua-Benjamin, Shanghai 2002.

7...♘e7

Black prepares to castle kingside. Instead 7...♕g6 is crafty as it stops White from safely moving the light-squared bishop because it is defending the g2 pawn.

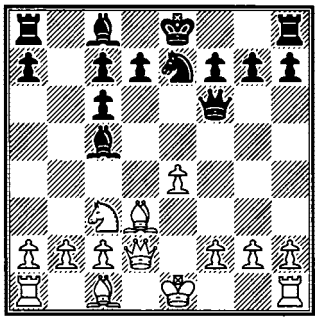
For instance:

a) 8 f4 8 ♕f4 ♘f6 9 ♗e3 (a direct way of exchanging Black's traditional influential bishop)

9...♗xe3 10 ♕xe3 0-0 11 0-0-0 d5 12 ♗d3 ♘g4 13 ♕d4 ♕f6 14 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♖he1 with White's better development giving him an edge, Shirov-Rodriguez Vargas, Cala Galdana 2001.

b) 8 f4 ♘e7 9 ♗d3 d5! and now instead of 10 e5? as played in Smeets-I.Sokolov, Enschede 2002, White should try 10 ♘a4! ♗d4 (10...dxe4 11 ♘xc5 exd3 12 cxd3 0-0 13 0-0 when the position is slightly in White's favour) 11 exd5 ♗f5 12 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 13 c3 ♘e3! 14 cxd4 ♘c2+ 15 ♔f2 ♘xa1 16 ♖e1+ ♔d8 17 b3 with the brighter prospects.

8 ♗d3

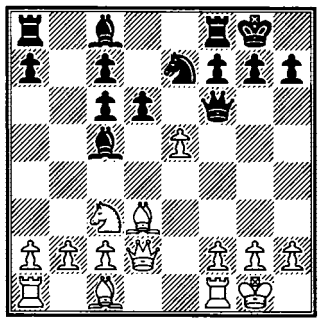


I wanted to castle kingside and steer the battle into the middlegame. 8 ♘a4 is another approach but it tends to involve the exchange of queens. For example: 8....♗b6 (8...♗d6 9 ♕g5 ♗e5 10 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 11 f4 d6 12 ♗d2 a5 13 0-0-0 0-0 14 ♖e1 ♗d4 15 g3 with equal opportunities, Sutovsky-Winants, Rethymnon 2003) 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 0-0 d6 11 ♕e2 (White makes way for his queen's bishop to be developed) 11...♘g6 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 f4 ♕d4+ 14 ♔h1 (if 14 ♗e3 then Black can get away with 14 ..♕xb2) 14...f5 15 ♖d1 threatening ♗c4+ led to roughly equal chances in Rublevsky-Bologan, Dortmund 2004.

8....♘g6

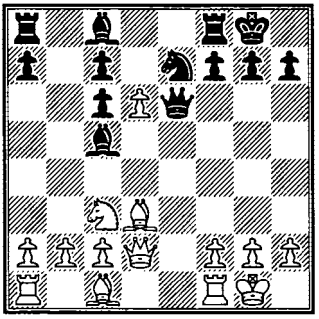
Azarov keeps watch over the e5 square. I must admit that I was hoping for the tricky line 8...d6 9 0-0 when play might continue:

a) 9...0-0 is a normal looking move but Black comes under intense pressure from 10 e5! which is a first-class way of exploiting the exposed black queen. Play might continue:



a1) 10...♕h4?! 11 ♘e4 (threatening ♘xc5 to treble the c-pawns) 11...♗b6 (11...♗d4 12 exd6 cxd6 13 ♘xd6 ♗e6 14 ♕g5 ♕xg5 15 ♗xg5 1-0 Mellado Trivino-Terron Elena, Malaga 2000) 12 exd6 cxd6 13 ♘xd6 ♗g4 14 ♕g5 ♕xg5 15 ♗xg5 f6 16 ♖ae1 gave White a clear advantage in Van der Wiel-Jonkman, Wijk aan Zee 2002.

a2) 10....♕e6 11 exd6 and now:



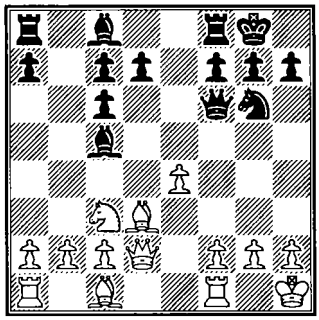
a21) 11...cxd6 12 ♖e1 ♕d7 13 ♘e4 ♗b6? 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6? 15 ♗xh7+ wins.

a22) 11...♗xd6 12 ♖e1 ♕g4 (or 12...♕d7 13 ♘e4 ♘g6 14 ♕c3 with an edge) 13 ♘e4 (threatening ♘xd6 to win the e7 knight) 13...♘g6 14 ♘xd6 (14 h3 ♕h4 15 ♕c3 also looks good) 14...cxd6 15 ♗e2 ♕d7 16 b3 when White's useful pair of bishops gave him the edge in Vescovi-Lima, Sao Paulo 2000.

a23) 11...♕xd6 12 ♘e4 ♕d5 13 ♕g5! (exploiting Black's lack of harmony by a forcing tactical sequence) 13...♕xg5 14 ♗xg5 h6 15 ♗xh6 ♗xf2+ 16 ♖xf2 gxh6 17 ♘f6+ ♔h8 18 ♘h7 ♖e8 19 ♖xf7 h5 20 ♘f6 1-0 Ciganikova-Quinn, Pula 1997)

b) 9...♗b6 10 ♔h1 ♕h4 11 f4 f5 12 b3!? fxe4 13 ♘xe4 0-0 14 ♗b2 ♗g4?! (maybe 14...♗f5 is necessary) 15 ♘g5 ♘f5 16 ♗xf5! (White wishes to increase the pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal so exchanges the main defender of the g7 pawn) 16...♖xf5 (16...♗xf5 17 ♕c3 ♕h6 18 ♕xc6 is good for White) 17 ♕c3 ♕h6 18 ♖ae1 ♖af8 (18....♖c5? runs into 19 ♕g3! when 19...♖xc2 20 ♕xg4 ♖xb2 21 ♖e6 g6 22 ♖e7 wins) 19 h3 gave White the brighter prospects in Svidler-Milov, Moscow 2001.

9 0-0 0-0 10 ♔h1!



A neat move to remove the king from the g1-a7 diagonal so that the f-pawn can be advanced.

10...♗b4

Black pins the knight in order to frustrate White's intentions of creating direct threats.

Also possible are:

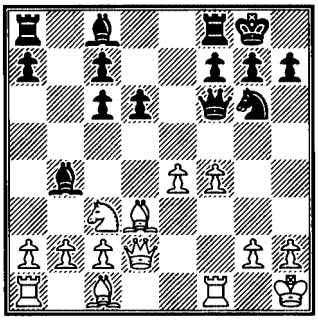
a) 10...♘e5!? 11 ♗e2 ♕h4 12 ♕f4 (or 12 f4 ♘g4 13 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 is equal) 12...♕xf4 13 ♗xf4 ♖e8 14 ♗g3 d6 15 ♘a4 ♗b6 16 ♘xb6 axb6 17 f4 ♘g4 18 ♗f3 with a level position, Collas-Petrosian, French Team Championship 2002.

b) 10...a5?! 11 f4 d6 12 e5! ♕h4 (12...dxe5 13 ♘e4 ♕e7 14 f5 ♘f4 15 f6 gxf6 16 ♕e1 with an excellent position) 13 ♘e4 ♗b6 14 exd6 ♗f5 15 ♕c3 gave White the superior position in Smagin-Gligoric, Belgrade 1991.

11 f4

I considered 11 ♘d5 but 11...cxd5 12 ♕xb4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 c6 is level.

11....d6



12 ♕f2

If White is looking for an alternative strategy then maybe the game Rohl Montes - Arias Boo, Sitges 1998, might provide inspiration: 12 ♕e1 a5 13 ♗d2 ♗a6 14 ♕g3 ♗xd3?! 15 cxd3 ♖fe8 16 ♖ae1 ♘f8 17 a3 ♗c5 18 e5 ♕f5 19 ♘e4 ♔h8 20 ♗c3 ♘e6 21 exd6 ♗d4 22 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 23 dxc7 ♕d7 24 f5 ♘xf5 25 ♕h3 1-0

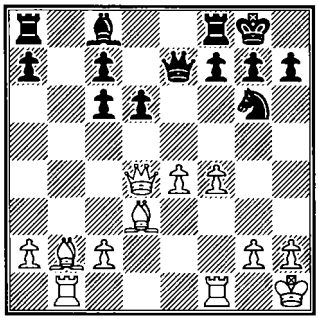
12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xc3

The Belarus grandmaster accepts the challenge and steals the pawn. A few months after this game Azarov once again played the same line against Collins in Goa but tried 13...♗d7 to avoid home preparation. That game went 14 ♕d4 ♕e7 15 c4 c5 16 ♕d5!? (there is always the danger of the white queen being trapped here so 16 ♕c3 is wiser with equal chances) 16...♖ab8 17 ♗d2 ♕e8 18 ♕h5 f6 19 ♗c3 when the position offered equal chances.

14 ♖b1 ♕f6

Or 14...♗d7 15 ♗b2 ♕a5 16 ♕d4 f6 17 ♗c3 ♕h5 (17...♕xa2?? allows 18 ♗c4+ winning the queen) 18 ♖b7 with the advantage.

15 ♗b2 ♕e7 16 ♕d4



16...f6

Black blocks the threat of mate and reduces White's influence on the a1-h8 diagonal. Instead 16...f5 allows White to maintain the pressure and gives him a motif to force the queen away from defending the g7 pawn by 17 ♖be1! when Black is in trouble.

17 ♕c4+ ♗e6 18 ♕xc6 ♗xa2

Black has to respond positively because the quiet 18...♕d8 runs into 19 ♗d4 ♗xa2 20 ♖b7 with a strong initiative.

19 ♖a1 ♗f7 20 ♗d4 a5 21 ♗c3

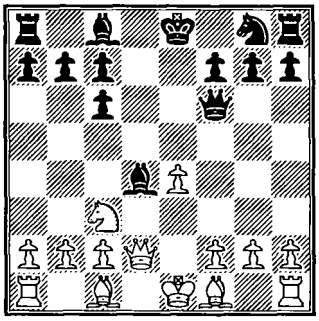
I felt it was time to win the pawn back to ensure equal chances.

21...a4 22 ♖xa4 ½-½

The main continuation is 6...dxc6 to free the light-squared bishop and allow the queen's rook to come to the d-file by ...♖d8 or queenside castling.

Kovchan – Kozakov
Alushta 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6 6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗d4



A ploy to get White away from the well known lines starting with 7...♗e6. Instead 7...♘e7 must also be treated with respect: 8 ♕f4 ♕e6 (8...♗e6 9 ♕xf6 gxf6 10 ♘a4 ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 0-0-0+ 13 ♗d3 with a draw the likely result, Ni Hua-Short, Taiyuan 2004; 8...♕xf4 9 ♗xf4 ♗d6 10 ♗e3, intending to castle queenside and advance the kingside pawn majority, is the right idea) 9 ♕xc7 (a less confrontational approach with 9 ♗d3!? is also possible: 9...0-0 10 0-0 ♘g6 11 ♕g3 ♕e5 12 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♗e2 with an equal ending, Andreikin-Riazantsev, Nojabrsk 2005) 9...♗b4 (or 9...0-0?! 10 ♕g3 f5 11 e5 f4 12 ♗xf4 ♕f7 13 ♘e4! gave White a clear advantage in Haslinger-Rudd, Edinburgh 2003) 10 ♗d2 ♗xc3 (recovering his material at the first opportunity has to be the best idea for Black) 11 ♗xc3 ♕xe4+ 12 ♔d2 ♕d5+ 13 ♔c1 ♗f5 14 ♕xb7 ♖d8 15 ♗d3 ♗xd3 16 cxd3 ♕g5+ 17 ♔c2 led to a double-edged position in M nca-Romanishin, St Vincent 2004.

8 ♘d1

White avoids the prospect of having his pawns doubled by ...♗xc3 and prepares c2-c3 to force the bishop to retreat. 8 ♗d3 is the main continuation. For instance: 8...♘e7 9 0-0 ♘g6 10 ♘e2 (or 10 ♔h1 ♘e5 11 ♗e2 ♘g4 12 ♘d1 ♕d6 13 f4 ♘xh2 14 ♔xh2 ♕h6+ 15 ♔g3 ♕g6+ 16 ♔h2 ♕h6+ is a popular way to draw in style by repetition) 10...♗b6 11 ♘f4 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 ♕c3 with equal chances, Stiri-Houska, Athens 2005.

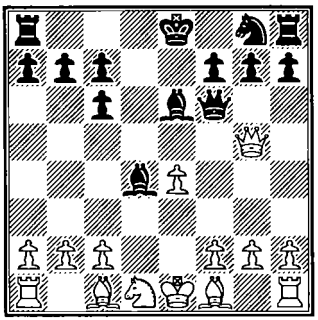
8...♗e6

Black carries on developing but 8...♘e7 is also a decent reply. For instance: 9 c3 ♗b6 10 ♗d3 ♘g6 11 ♕g5 (11 0-0!? is another way to handle the position) 11...♕d6 12 ♗c2 ♗e6 13 f4 threatening f4-f5 is roughly equal, Antal-Howell, Budapest 2003.

9 ♕g5

It is a theme in this line to offer an exchange of queens because the majority of pawns on the kingside offers better prospects in the ending. In the game Berthelot-Dourerassou, Guingamp 2004, White decided against an early

exchange of queens and played 9 c3 when 9...♗b6 10 ♕c2 ♕g6 11 ♗e3 ♘f6 12 f3 0-0 13 ♗d3 led to equal chances.



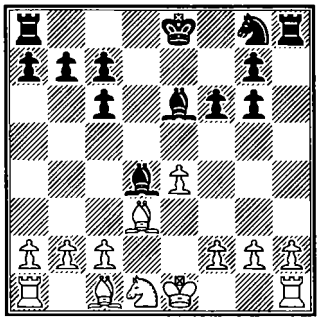
9...♕g6!?

An idea of Dorfman's to allow the black queen to be exchanged in the knowledge that recapturing with the h-pawn will activate the king's rook. 9...0-0-0 10 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 (10...gxf6 11 ♘e3 ♘e7 12 c3 gives White a slight edge) 11 f3 ♗b6 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4 ♖he8 14 ♗d3 ♗a5+ 15 ♔e2 (White can get away with moving his king in such a position in order to help to co-ordinate the rooks) 15...a6 16 ♗e1 ♗xe1 17 ♖xe1 b5 18 ♘e3 ♔b7 19 ♖ed1 with roughly equal chances, Nataf-Tseitlin, Kapuskasing 2004.

10 ♗d3

The e-pawn is attacked so White simply develops another piece and defends it. 10 f3 f6 (Black is content to exchange the queens since if White declines then Black's superior development gives him an edge) 11 ♕xg6+ hxg6 12 ♗e3 (12 c3 ♗c5 13 ♗e3 ♗d6 14 h3 is equal) 12...0-0-0 13 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♘e3 ♘e7 15 ♖d1 c5 16 a3 g5 17 c3 ♖xd1+ 18 ♔xd1 ♘g6 19 g3 led to a level position in Nataf-Dorfman,Val d'Isere 2004.

10...f6 11 ♕xg6+ hxg6



With accurate play, the chances must be assessed as level. The best strategy for White is to seek piece exchanges and then advance his kingside pawn majority.

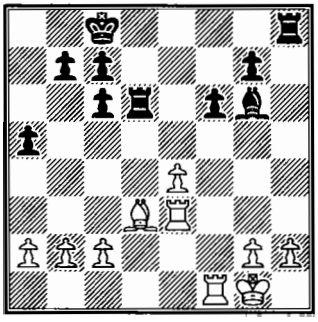
12 ♗e3 0-0-0 13 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♘c3 g5!?

Kozakov is in no mood to sit and wait so he holds up White's pawns while making room for the knight manoeuvre ...♘e7-g6.

15 0-0 ♘e7 16 ♘e2 ♖d6 17 f4 gxf4 18 ♘xf4

White has elected to give himself an isolated e-pawn but the plan will be to get rid of it with ♖ae1 followed by e4-e5. After all, the more kingside pawns that are exchanged the quicker a passed pawn will be created.

18...♗f7 19 ♖ae1 ♘g6 20 ♘xg6 ♗xg6 21 ♖e3 a5?



Black wrongly assumed that 21 ♖e3 was played to protect the d3 bishop when the e-pawn is advanced so he makes a casual move. In fact White can now pile on the pressure and win a pawn.

22 ♖g3! ♖h6 23 ♖f4

Kovchan takes the simple course of preparing to double on the g-file – and it is a winner!

23...a4 24 a3 c5 25 ♖fg4 ♗f7 26 ♖xg7

White wins a vital pawn which leaves him with a passed h-pawn and Black's position rapidly collapses.

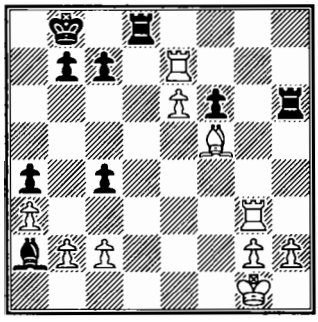
26...♗a2 27 ♖e7 c4 28 e5!

An excellent idea to allow the bishop to emerge with an irritating check on f5 after which the tactics will flow.

28...♖d8

If 28...fxe5 then 29 ♖g8+ ♖d8 30 ♗f5+ wins easily.

29 ♗f5+ ♔b8 30 e6



A look at the position indicates that White has a superb passed pawn on the sixth rank whereas Black has embarrassingly blocked in his own bishop.

30...♖d1+ 31 ♔f2 ♖d5 32 ♖f3 c3 33 bxc3 ♖xh2 34 ♗h3

The threat is ♔g1 but just as important is the fact that the h-rook is locked out of the action.

34...♖h1 35 ♖e3 ♖d2+ 36 ♖e2 ♖d8 37 ♖d7

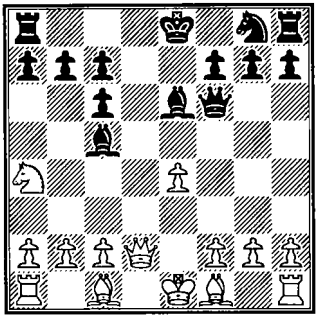
Kovchan can easily shuffle his pieces to facilitate the promotion of the e-pawn.

37...♖e8 38 e7 ♗f7 39 ♖d8+ ♔a7 40 ♗d7 1-0

The big test is to see how Kasparov's method of handling the position for White can achieve success.

Voitsekhovsky – Bedia
Voronezh 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6 6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗e6 8 ♘a4



This is the star move which Kasparov played against Short in his 1993 World Championship match. Black now has to contend with the prospect of withdrawing the bishop to a less aggressive square or else give up any plan of castling queenside.

8...♖d8

Black takes the opportunity to attack the queen and set up some tactics should White get careless.

Also possible:

a) 8...♗d6!? is primarily designed to allow queenside castling but 9 ♕e3 prevents this because of the loose a7 pawn. There can follow: 9...♘h6 10 h3 (the black knight is restricted and the possibility of a kingside attack aided by g2-g4 is now possible) 10...0-0 (10...♕e7 11 ♗d3 f6 12 ♗d2 ♘f7 13 f4 led to equal chances in Nataf-Van der Wiel, Fuerstenfeld 2001) 11 ♗d3 ♖fe8 12 ♗d2 ♖ad8 13 0-0-0 ♕e7 14 e5 ♗b4 15 g4 ♗xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 ♗d5 17 ♖g1 ♔h8 18 f4 f6 19 g5 fxg5 20 ♖xg5 and White had decent attacking chances in Paragua-Antoine Milhomme, Trignac 2002.

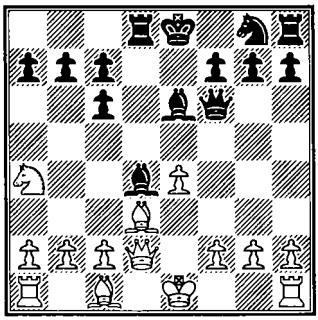
b) 8...♗b6 9 ♘xb6 axb6 10 ♗d3 ♘e7 11 a3 0-0 12 0-0 intending f2-f4 gives White an edge.

c) 8...♗e7 9 ♕e3 (as usual when the bishop retreats, this move, eyeing the a7 pawn, rules out any safe queenside castling by Black) 9...♘h6 10 h3 (a precaution to reduce the mobility of the black knight) 10...0-0 11 ♗d3 (White has the simple plan of kingside castling followed by f2-f4) 11...♗b4+ 12 c3 ♗d6 13 ♘c5 b6 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 0-0 ♘f7 16 ♕e2 ♘e5 17 ♗c2 ♘g6 18 g3 ♕f3 19 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 20 ♗b3 ♘f8 21 ♔g2 ♖f7 22 f4 with a promising ending due to the weak e6 pawn, Ljubicic-Rios, Internet 2001.

9 ♗d3

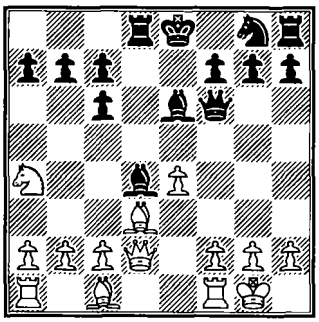
White blocks the d-file but it is easy to go wrong: 9 ♕e2? ♗xf2+ 10 ♕xf2 ♖d1+ wins or 9 ♕f4 ♗xf2+ 10 ♕xf2 (or 10 ♔xf2 is met by 10...♕d4+ and the knight on a4 can be taken) 10...♖d1+ 11 ♔e2 ♗g4+ wins.

9...♗d4



10 0-0

White castles to avoid any tricks associated with capturing on f2. The immediate 10 c3 allows Black to liquidate the pieces and achieve equality: 10...♗xf2+! 11 ♕xf2 ♖xd3 12 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 13 ♘c5 ♖d8 14 ♘xb7 ♖b8 15 ♘c5 ♖b5 (15...0-0?! 16 b3 ♖b5 17 ♗a3 ♖e8 18 0-0-0 gave White the better ending in Vuckovic-Savanovic, Budva 2003) 16 b4 ♘xe4! 17 a4 (if 17 ♘xe4 then 17...♖e5 recovers the piece) 17...♖xc5 18 bxc5 ♗c4 (Black's minor pieces make it awkward for White to develop his rooks and provide him with sufficient compensation) 19 ♗e3 (19 ♗f4 is worth investigating) 19...0-0 20 ♗d4 ♖b8 21 0-0-0 ♗e2! 22 ♖he1 (22 ♖de1? is a disaster upon 22...♗d3 threatening mate) 22...♗xd1 23 ♖xe4 ♗b3 24 ♖g4 g6 ½-½ Van den Doel-Winants, Breda 1996.



10...♘e7

This was Short's choice against Kasparov in the first big test of White's strategy and it continues to attract followers. It starts a forcing sequence which offers a double-edged ending where Black has an extra pawn but has to carry out plenty of defensive work in order to hang on to it. The alternatives 10...a6 and 10...b5 are looked at in the next main game.

Other moves:

a) 10...♕h4 11 ♕f4 (or 11 ♕g5 ♕xg5 12 ♗xg5 ♘e7 13 ♖fd1 is possible but the position is level) 11...♕h5 12 ♕g3 (12 ♕xc7?? is shown to be a mistake upon 12...♗e5 threatening the queen and mate on h2) 12...♕g6 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗f4 ♕xg3 15 ♗xg3 b5 (15...♖d7 16 c3 ♗b6 17 ♖fd1 gives White an edge) 16 c3! bxa4 17 cxd4 ♖xd4 18 ♖fd1 ♖b4 19 ♖d2 gave White the better chances due to Black's battered queenside pawns in Afromeev-Dvalishvili, Tula 2001.

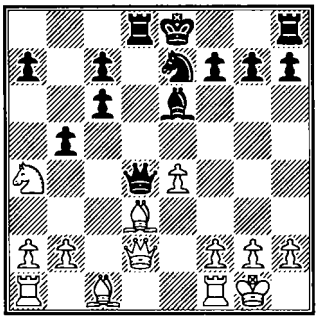
b) 10...♘h6 11 h3 (in the Kasparov Variation a knight development on h6 is usually met in this way to stop it coming to g4) 11...a6 12 ♕f4 (maybe 12 ♕a5!? needs to be considered) 12...♕xf4 13 ♗xf4 b5 14 ♘c3 ♖d7 15 a4! led to a slight initiative in the game Goloshchapov-Lanzani, Montecatini Terme 1999.

11 c3 b5!

This is the key to the line because Black fights back by attacking the knight. Instead J.O'Connor-Hagelstein, Corr 2003, saw the passive 11...♗e5 which allowed White to claim an instant advantage by 12 f4. That game went 12...♗d4+ 13 ♔h1 ♗b6 14 ♘xb6 cxb6 15 ♕c2 ♗g4 16 f5 0-0 17 ♗f4 with the brighter prospects. Instead the crafty 11...a6!?, to complicate matters, can be defused by 12 ♕e2 (12 cxd4 ♕xd4 13 b3 ♕xd3 14

♕xd3 ♖xd3 15 ♘c5 ♖c3 16 ♘xb7 f6 17 ♗f4 is better for White) 12...♗a7 13 ♗e3 ♗xe3 14 ♕xe3 with an edge.

12 cxd4 ♕xd4



13 ♕c2

13 ♕a5 has been tested but transposes back to the game after 13...♕xa4 14 ♕xa4 but at least it might gain time on the clock. If Black tries to be different with 13...♕xd3 then 14 ♘c5 is an ideal square for the knight, e.g. 14...♕c2 (14...♕e2 is well met by 15 ♗g5! with the advantage; 14...♕c4 15 ♗e3 0-0 16 ♕xc7 and Black is in trouble) 15 ♗e3! 0-0 (or 15...♕xb2 16 ♕xc7 threatening ♘b7 is strong) 16 ♕xc7 ♖fe8 17 b3 gives White winning chances.

13...♕xa4

The alternative 13...♕xd3 is hardly ever played because White can quickly develop and pose Black problems: 14 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 15 ♘c5 ♖d8 16 ♗f4 ♖c8 (if 16...♗c4 then 17 ♖fd1 ♖c8 18 a4 favours White) 17 a4 with a strong initiative. Also possible is 13...bxa4 14 ♖d1! ♗g4 (14...0-0 15 ♗e3 ♕f6 16 ♗c5 threatening e4-e5 is good news for White) 15 ♖d2 ♕b4 16 ♗e2! ♗xe2 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18 ♕xe2 when Black's vulnerable king gives White good attacking chances.

14 ♕xa4 bxa4 15 ♗c2 ♗c4

Or 15...♖d4 to protect the a-pawn is not much good upon 16 ♗e3 ♖b4 17 ♖fb1 a6 18 a3 ♖b8 19 ♗xa4 when White is better.

16 ♖e1

There is still some debate about where to put the rook but in this case White is happy to copy Kasparov's example. 16 ♖d1!? has been tested, then 16...♗b5 (16...♖xd1+? 17 ♗xd1 ♗b5 18 ♗f4 ♔d8 19 ♗g4 with an excellent position due to the prospect of ♖d1+) 17 ♗e3 (17 ♗f4 is met by 17..♖d7 and Black can struggle on) 17...♘c8 (17...a6 18 b3 0-0? 19 ♗c5 is very good for White in view of the line 19...♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖e8? 21 ♗xe7 ♖xe7? 22 ♖d8+ ♖e8 23 ♖xe8 mate) 18 ♗c5 ♘b6 19 f4 ♗e2 20 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 21 ♔f2 ♗b5 22 ♔f3 when I prefer White due to the harmony of his pieces although the game was eventually drawn, Hennigan-Arkhipov, Cappelle la Grande 1995.

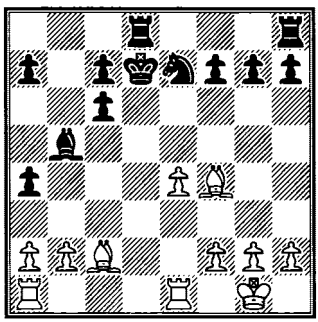
16...♗b5

It is worth noting that the rarely played 16...♗d3 17 ♗xa4 ♖d4 is in White's favour due to 18 ♗b3! ♖xe4 19 ♗e3 when the big threat is not taking the pawn on a7 but ♗c5. After 19...♘d5 20 ♖ad1 ♗a6 21 ♗xa7 White has the advantage.

17 ♗f4

This is the latest twist in the line with White immediately targeting the c7 pawn. 17 ♗e3 ♘c8 (17...a6 18 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 0-0? 0 ♗c5 ♖e8 21 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 22 ♖d8+ leads to mate) 18 b3 (or 18 ♗c5 ♘b6 19 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 a6 21 f4 ♘d7 22 ♗a3 h5 gave Black some active play and the game was eventually drawn in Kasparov-Short, Game 11, World Championship, London 1993) 18...axb3 19 ♗xb3 ♖d3 (19...0-0 20 a4 ♗d3 21 f3 ♖d7 22 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 23 ♗g5! with the better position) 20 ♖ec1 ♘b6 21 ♗c2 ♖a3 (or 21...♖d7 when 22 a4 ♗e2 23 e5, threatening ♗e4, favours White) 22 ♗b3 f6!? 23 ♖c3 (the threat is ♗f7+) 23...♖a6 24 f4! ♘a4 25 ♖c2 ♔e7 26 e5! with attacking opportunities, Lautier-Turner, French Team Championship 2000.

17...♔d7!?



The king helps to protect the c7 pawn. Perhaps 17...♖d7 is a safer choice but White has plenty of active play in return for the pawn: 18 ♖ad1 ♘g6 (18...♔d8 19 ♗e3 a6 20 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 21 ♗d4 f6 22 e5 gives White a decent initiative) 19 ♗e3 a6 20 f4 and it is difficult for Black to co-ordinate his pieces safely.

18 b3 axb3 19 ♗xb3

White may have helped to get rid of Black's doubled a-pawns but in return his light-squared bishop is menacing.

19...f6 20 a4 ♗d3

20...♗a6 21 ♖ad1+ ♔c8 22 ♖b1 ♔d7 23 ♖ed1+ ♔e8 (23...♔c8?? allows 24 ♗e6+) 24 ♗xc7 is better for White who has regained his pawn and still has a terrific attack.

21 f3 c5 22 ♖ac1 ♖b8

Maybe 22...♘g6 23 ♗e3 c4 24 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 25 ♖xc4 is the best that Black can hope for but the simplification still favours White.

23 ♖c3 ♖xb3

A dubious venture by Black to inject some complications into the game rather than continue a dour defensive task. Instead 23...c4 24 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 25 ♖xc4 ♖b7 26 ♖d1+ ♔c8 27 ♖dc1 c6 28 ♗d6 leaves Black struggling.

24 ♖xb3 c4 25 ♖b7!

White goes on the offensive and denies Black the time to hustle the advance of the c-pawn.

25...♖c8 26 ♔f2 ♘c6

If 26...c3?? then 27 ♖d1 wraps up the game.

27 ♔e3 a5 28 ♖c1 ♘b4 29 ♖b5 c5?!

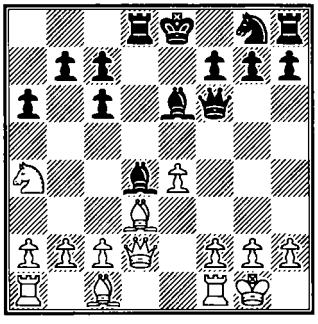
Black concedes an important pawn – moroever White is presented with a passed a-pawn which will clinch victory. Instead 29...♘c6, defending the a-pawn, fails to 30 ♖d5+ ♔e7 31 ♖xd3! cxd3 32 ♖xc6 winning comfortably. 29...♖a8 is the only chance but it is hardly ambitious and White will eventually win.

30 ♖xa5 ♔c6 31 ♔f2 ♗c2 32 ♔g1 ♗b3 33 ♗e3 ♘d3 34 ♖b1 1-0

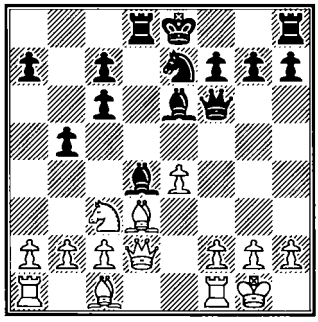
Black might steer away from this line so the major alternative 10...a6 is explored in the next game:

Gurcan – Mamedjarova
European Championship,
Batumi 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6 6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗e6 8 ♘a4 ♖d8 9 ♗d3 ♗d4 10 0-0 a6



Black makes room for the bishop to retreat. The only drawback is that he is already behind in development and his king is still stuck in the middle of the board. 10...b5 is an idea to force the knight back and allow the dark-squared bishop to retreat. After 11 ♘c3 ♘e7 play might continue:



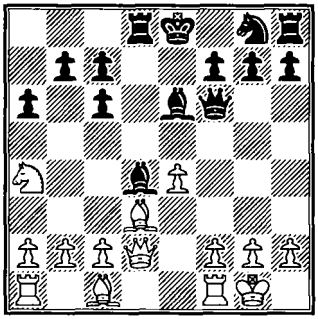
a) 12 ♔h1 to allow f2-f4 is worth thinking about when Chandler-Khalifman, German Team Championship 1993, continued 12...♕h4 13 ♘e2 ♗b6 14 a4 a6 15 ♕f4 ♕xf4 16 ♘xf4 (or 16 ♗xf4 ♔d7!? 17 ♖fd1 ♔c8 18 ♔g1 is slightly better for White) 16...♗c8 17 ♗e2 0-0 18 ♘d3 f5 19 e5 ♘d5 20 ♗g5 ♖de8 21 ♗h5 with roughly equal chances.

The key difference with a pawn on b5 is that White has 12 a4 undermining the queenside pawns. And now:

b1) 12...b4 13 ♘e2 c5 14 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♕f4 c4 (not 15...♖d7? when 16 ♗e3 ♕xb2 17 ♗xc5 gives White the advantage) 16 ♗e2 ♘g6 17 ♕xc7 0-0 18 c3 bxc3 19 bxc3 ♕xc3 20 ♗g5 ♖d7 21 ♕c5 ½-½ Nunn-Flear, Isle of Man 1994)

b2) 12...a6 13 ♔h1 (the king gets off the g1-a7 diagonal to facilitate f2-f4) 13...0-0 14 f4 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 c5 16 ♕e1 ♗c4 17 ♗xc4 bxc4 18 ♗a3 ♖fe8 (18...♕c6 met by 19

♕e2 attacking the c-pawn) 19 ♗xc5 ♕c6 20 ♕f2 ♘g6 21 e5 with the better chances, Sedlak-Rybansky, Balatonlelle 2001.



11 ♕a5

White follows Kasparov's example and threatens the c-pawn. The maestro tried 11 ♘c3 in Game 17 of his World Championship match against Short in London 1993. That encounter continued 11...♘e7 12 ♘e2 ♗b6 (12...♗xb2?! 13 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 14 ♖ab1 ♕xa2 15 ♕c3!? 0-0 16 ♕b4 threatening ♖a1) 13 ♕f4 ♘g6?! (13...♕xf4 14 ♘xf4 ♗c8 is equal) 14 ♕xf6 gxf6 15 ♘g3 and White had an edge due to the doubled f-pawns.

11...b5

Black accepts the challenge and attempts to cut off the white queen from the action by threatening the knight.

Other moves:

a) 11...b6!? 12 ♕xa6 ♗c8 13 ♕a7 b5 14 ♘c5 ♕e5 15 ♗e3 ♗xe3 16 fxe3 ♘f6 17 ♗e2 0-0 18 ♘d3 ♕g5 (or 18...♕xe4 19 ♗f3 ♕e7 20 ♕c5 ♕xc5 21 ♘xc5 ♖d2 22 ♖f2 with the better ending due to the weakness of the c6 pawn, Pavasovic-Flores, Internet 2000) 19 ♗f3 ♘g4 20 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 21 ♕c5 ♕xc5 22 ♘xc5 ♖fe8 23 h3 ♗h5 24 g4 ♗g6 25 ♖fd1 when the strong knight on c5 gave White the superior position, Rosito-Roselli Mailhe, Mar del Plata 2001.

b) 11...♖d7 allows White to exchange the useful dark-squared bishop by 12 ♘c5 ♗xc5 13 ♕xc5 ensuring a slight edge.

c) 11...♕e5 12 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗e3 (13 ♘c5!? ♗c8 14 ♗e2, intending ♘d3, is about equal) 13...b6 14 f4 ♗d4 15 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 16 ♘c3 ♗c8 17 f5! temporarily locking the light-squared bishop out of the game and securing an edge in Palac-Srebrnic, Ljubljana 1997.

d) 11...♕e7!? 12 ♗g5 ♘f6 13 ♖ae1 h6 14 ♗e3 b6 15 ♕d2 c5 16 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 17 ♘c3 c4 18 ♕e3 c5 19 ♗e2 with roughly equal chances, Leko-Lukacs, Hungarian Team Championships 1995.

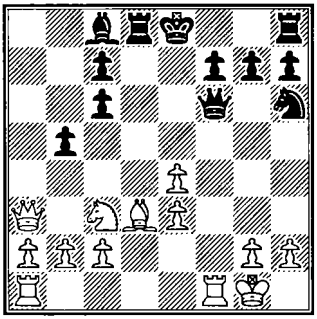
12 ♘c3 ♗b6 13 ♕xa6

In return for the pawn Black hopes for compensation in the offside positon of the enemy queen.

13...♘h6

If 13...♘e7 then White should use the main game as a model and continue with 14 ♗e3 in order to give the white queen more space, then 14...♗xe3 15 fxe3 ♕e5 16 ♕a3 ♖b8 17 ♕a7 0-0 18 ♕d4 offers roughly equal chances.

14 ♗e3 ♗c8 15 ♕a3 ♗xe3 16 fxe3



The doubled e-pawns look ugly but they control important squares.

16...♕e5

Or 16...♕g5!? 17 e5 ♕xe3+ 18 ♔h1 ♘g4? (18...♕b6 19 ♘e4 is roughly equal) 19 ♘xb5! cxb5 (19...♘f2+ 20 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 21 ♘xc7+ ♔d7 22 ♕d6 mate) 20 ♗xb5+ ♗d7 21 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♕a8+ ♖d8 23 ♕c6+ ♖d7 24 ♖ad1 winning.

17 ♗e2 ♗e6

Black has a variety of alternatives but it is not easy to see any compensation for the pawn deficit. Or 17...♘g4 18 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 19 ♕b4 (19 ♖f4 ♗c8 20 ♖af1 f6 21 ♕b4 gives White an edge) 19...♕e7 20 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 21 a4 offering White the better chances. The game Kasparov-Yusupov, Horgen 1994 saw 17...♖d6 18 ♖ad1 0-0 19 ♖xd6 cxd6 20 ♖d1 c5? 21 ♘xb5 ♗g4 (if 21...♕xe4 then 22 ♕d3 is excellent for White due to the weak backward d-pawn) 22 ♕d3 ♕xb2 23 a4 with the superior chances

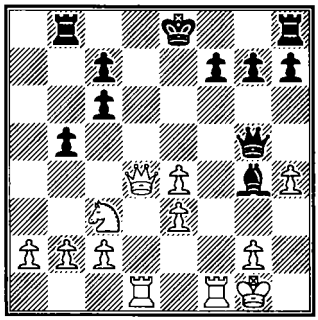
18 ♖ad1 ♖b8 19 ♕b4

19 ♖d4, to stop ...b5-b4, is another option.

19...♘g4 20 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 21 ♕d4 ♕g5

Black is understandably wary of entering an ending a pawn down.

22 h4!



22...♕h6

Alternatively 22...♕xh4 23 ♕e5+ ♗e6 24 ♕xg7 ♖f8 25 ♖f6, threatening ♖xe6+, is very strong.

23 ♕e5+ ♗e6 24 ♕c5 ♖b6 25 ♖f4 g5

Black has run out of constructive moves and has a hopeless task:

a) 25...♖a6 allows 26 ♘xb5 cxb5 27 ♕xb5+ when Black is busted.

b) 25...♗c8 26 ♕e5+ ♗e6 27 ♕xc7 winning.

c) 25...♕g6 26 ♘xb5 cxb5 27 ♕xc7 with victory in sight.

26 hxg5 ♕f8 27 ♕e5 ♖b7 28 ♘d5!

Gurcan finds a way to break through. Black has a hopeless position.

28...cxd5 29 exd5 ♖b6 30 dxe6 1-0

Conclusion

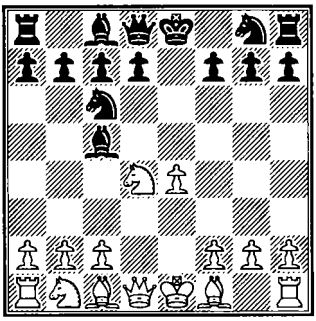
The Kasparov Variation has a good reputation and improvements continue to be found for both sides. The line with 8 ♘a4 still scores highly in positions that oblige Black to defend stoutly. The success of the main line has encouraged Black to look for early deviations, many of which are reasonable and leave White having to work hard to secure an edge from the opening. In these side-lines the battle for supremacy occurs in the middlegame.

Lane – Azarov saw 6...bxc6 which is slightly unusual but I decided to just carry on developing. White will always have an edge and it will be his opponent who is playing catch up all the time. The game **Kovchan – Kozakov** went 6...dxc6 7 ♘c3 when 7...♗d4 was tried. This is a tough nut to crack but the steady reply 8 ♘d1 retains the tension. **Voitsekhovsky – Bedia** features the main line with 8 ♘a4 and concentrates on the system with 10...♘e7. This is a critical game and at the moment of writing White seems to be doing well. It makes sense to follow the example of Kasparov and **Gurcan – Mamedjarova** sees White exploring established theory. Black finds it quite a struggle to cope with the problems facing him and White emerges on top.

Classical Variation:

4...♗c5 5 ♗e3

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3

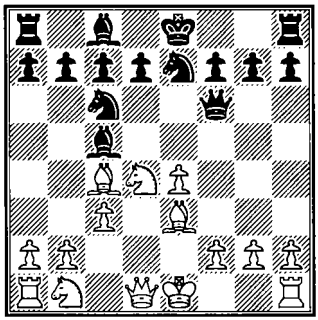


History

This line has been well known since the early days of the opening but sometimes Black has struggled to find the right course of action. Calvi-Kieseritzky, Paris 1842 is a prime example with 5 ♗e3 being met by the quirky 5....♕e7. In the following decades the line for White went out of fashion and was largely neglected by the top players. The enormous revival was due to Kasparov's use of the line in his World Championship match against Short in 1993 and now it is in serious contention to take over as the main line in the Scotch.

The Basic Plan for White

White supports the knight in the centre with 5 ♗e3 and 6 c3, and follows up by tactical play on the kingside. However there is still room for improvements in obscure variations so the line continues to be popular.



The key position of this variation which represents the start of the battle.

The Basic Plan for Black

Black immediately applies pressure by targeting the knight on d4. The modern variations have become fairly well known so Black has refined his defence in an attempt to secure equality.

Hernandez Guerrero – Garcia Fernandez
Cullera 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5

A popular continuation which forces White to make a decision on how to deal with the threat to the knight.

5 ♗e3

The threat is 6 ♘xc6 followed by ♗xc5.

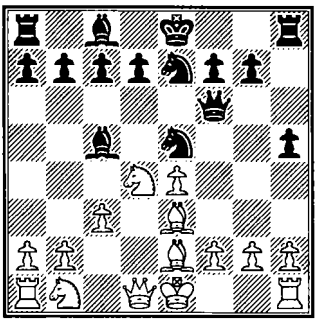
5...♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4

White points the bishop aggressively towards Black's kingside.

7....♘e5

The knight knocks the bishop off its perch – this continuation is considered the main line. The alternatives 7....b6 and 7....0-0 are discussed later in the chapter.

8 ♗e2 h5!?



An unusual idea which has been used successfully by Black in an effort to attack on the kingside while contemplating queenside castling.

9 0-0

This seems to be the best plan of action – to ignore the pawn and carry on developing.

a) The obvious solution 9 ♗xh5?!, grabbing the spare pawn, allows Black to generate an initiative by 9....♘c4 10 ♗c1 ♕e5 11 ♗f3 ♖xh2 12 ♖xh2 ♕xh2 when Black has restored the material level and has a slight edge.

b) 9 ♘c2 was tried in Nedev-Yurtaev, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, which gave the h-pawn advance a lot of credibility after Black won a long game: 9...d6 (9...♗xe3 10 ♘xe3 d6 11 ♘a3 a6 led to equal play in Trabert-Lematschko, Ptuj 1995) 10 ♘ba3 ♗d7 11 ♕d2 (perhaps 11 ♘b5 is worth analysing) 11...0-0-0 12 f4 ♘g4 13 ♗d4 ♕e6 14 0-0-0 (or 14 h3 ♘f6 15 e5 ♘e4 16 ♕e3 ♗c6 17 ♗c4 ♕g6 with the superior chances) 14...♘c6 (the pawn is taboo due to 14....♕xe4? 15 ♗xg4 hxg4 16 ♖de1 and White wins) 15 h3 ♘f6 16 e5 ♗xa3 17 exf6 ♕xa2 18 ♘xa3 ♘a5 19 ♕c2? (19 ♗c4! is necessary) 19....♘b3+ 20 ♕xb3 ♕xb3 21 fxg7 ♖hg8 and Black had achieved a winning advantage.

c) 9 f3 d6 (perhaps Black needs to be more positive before his pieces are forced back from the centre by 9....♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕f6 when at least White's pawn structure has been slightly weakened) 10 ♘d2 ♘7g6

11 ♘2b3 ♘f4 12 ♗f1 ♗b6 13 ♕d2 g5? (13...♘e6! is necessary when 14 0-0-0 offers level chances) 14 h4! ♘eg6 15 g3 ♘e6 16 hxg5 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♕e5 18 f4 ♕xe4 19 ♗g2 ♕e7 20 0-0-0 c6 21 ♖de1 with an excellent attack, Van den Brande - Nieto, Belgium Team Championship 2005.

9...♘g4

Having done the preparatory work Black is virtually obliged to plant the knight on g4.

10 ♗xg4 hxg4 11 ♕xg4 d5 12 ♕g3

Removing his queen from the discovered attack whilst maintaining ambitions of a kingside onslaught backed up by his superior development. Instead 12 ♕g5 would throw away any aggressive possibilities since the ending after 12....♗d6 13 h3 ♕xg5 14 ♗xg5 f6 15 ♗e3 dxe4 16 ♘d2 is equal, Murariu-Khamzin, Kuala Lumpur 2002.

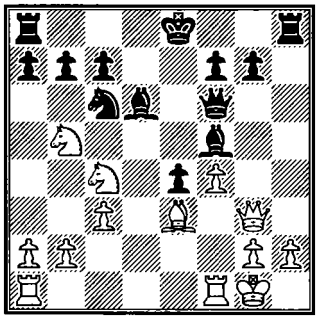
12...♗d6

A little finesse because 12...dxe4 allows 13 ♘d2 with the better game and 13...♗d6 (13....♗f5 14 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 15 ♕xc7 with the advantage) 14 ♘xe4 ♗xg3 15 ♘xf6+ gxf6 16 fxg3 leads to a winning position.

13 f4 dxe4 14 ♘d2 ♗f5 15 ♘b5 ♘c6

Or 15...♕h4 16 ♕xh4 ♖xh4 17 ♘c4 ♔d7 18 ♖ad1 with a slight edge.

16 ♘c4



16...♔f8

The king steps out of the firing line but without coordinated rooks his kingside attack will be harmless. Instead 16...0-0-0 leads to the wrecking of his queenside pawn barrier after 17 ♘cxd6+ cxd6 18 ♘xa7+ ♘xa7 19 ♗xa7 and White is on top.

17 ♘cxd6 cxd6 18 ♖ad1 ♗e6

It is not worth defending the pawn with 18...♖d8 due to 19 ♘xd6 ♖xd6? 20 ♗c5 with an excellent position.

19 ♖xd6 ♕f5 20 ♘c7 ♗c4

Black is in deep trouble because 20...♖c8 allows 21 ♘xe6+ fxe6 22 ♖d7 when the threat to the pawns on g7 and b7 spells victory for White.

21 ♘xa8 ♗xf1 22 ♔xf1 ♔e7 23 ♖d2 ♖xa8 24 ♕xg7

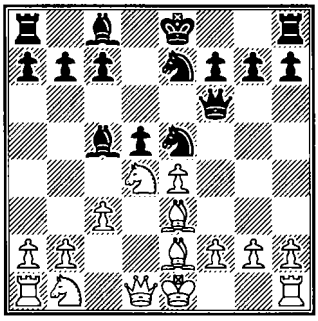
White is two pawns up and the grandmaster cruises to a win.

24...♕b5+ 25 ♔f2 1-0

The next step is to see how to handle 8....d5 which challenge's White's hold on the centre:

Nedev – Sanz Alonso
Barbera 2000

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 ♘e5 8 ♗e2 d5!?



This early advance in the centre has a certain amount of venom and has the benefit of surprise value.

9 0-0

White just ignores the threat to the e-pawn and whisks his king to safety.

Also possible:

a) 9 f4 prompts a sharp response: 9 ...♘g4! intending 10 ♗xg4 ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕xg4 with equality.

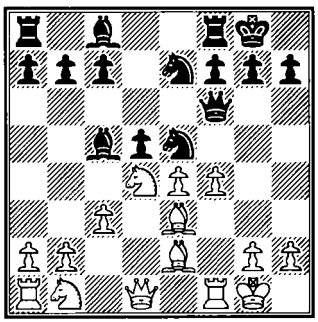
b) 9 ♘b5? is exactly what Black wants in view of 9...♗xe3 10 fxe3 ♕h4+! 11 ♔f1 (11 g3 ♕xe4 12 ♖f1 ♔d8 is better for Black) 11...♘g4! 12 ♗xg4 (12 ♕e1?? leads to a nightmare scenario after 12...♘xe3+ 13 ♔g1 ♕xe1+) 12...♗xg4 13 ♕d4 ♘c6!? 14 ♕c5 (14 ♕xd5 0-0 aiming to play ...♖ad8 is good news for Black) 14...♕f6+ 15 ♔g1 b6 16 ♕xd5 ♖d8 17 ♘xc7+ ♔f8 winning.

c) 9 ♘d2 ♕g6 (9...0-0 10 0-0 transposes to the note to White's tenth move) 10 ♖g1!? (a quirky move but 10 0-0 allows Black good play upon 10...♗h3 11 ♗f3 0-0-0) 10...dxe4 11 ♘b5 ♗d6? (11...♗b6 12 ♘xe4 is roughly equal but not 12...♕xe4? 13 ♗xb6 winning) 12 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 13 ♕xd6! with a spectacular victory in sight, S.Oliver-Verdiana, World Junior championship 2004.

9...0-0

It is worth noting what to do against 9...dxe4? which is tempting but an error of judgement due to 10 ♘b5! ♗d6 (or 10...♕b6 11 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 12 ♕d4! winning, Lane-Albers, Brussels rapidplay 2000) 11 ♗c5! (a strong move which swings the game in White's favour but surprisingly it has been missed in a lot of games) 11...0-0 12 ♘xd6 cxd6 13 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 14 ♗xd6 ♘5c6 15 ♘d2 ♖e8 16 ♖fe1 ♗f5 17 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 18 ♘b3 led to the superior ending in Steingrimsson-Malaniuk, Kecskemet 1991.

10 f4!



The best response to put pressure on Black straight out of the

opening. Instead, protecting the e-pawn by 10 ♘d2 is considered too passive: 10...♗b6 11 f4 ♕h6! 12 ♔h1 ♘5c6 (12...dxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘5c6 14 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 15 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 16 ♗c4 ♘f5 17 ♖e1 ♘e3 18 ♕b3 ♘xc4 19 ♕xc4 ♗e6 when the bishop is superior to the knight and gives Black slightly the better opportunities, Lyell-Haslinger, Edinburgh 2003) 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♗g1 dxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘f5 16 ♗d3 ♗xg1 17 ♖xg1 ♕xf4 18 ♖f1 ♕h6 19 ♕f3 ♘e3 20 ♖fe1 ♘d5 with a plus for Black, Amonatov-Yemelin, Sochi 2005.

10...♘c4

The knight hops to c4 in order to harass the dark-squared bishop. Perhaps the main alternative is 10...♘5c6 when after 11 e5 play might continue:

a) 11...♕h6 12 ♕d2 ♗xd4 13 cxd4 ♘f5 14 ♗f2 f6 15 ♘c3 fxe5 (15...♗e6 is met by 16 ♖ad1 with a slight plus) 16 ♘xd5! exd4 17 ♘xc7 ♖b8 18 ♗c4+ ♔h8 19 ♖fe1 when White's superior pieces gave him the edge in Vosahlík-Safaryan, Internet 2004.

b) 11...♕h4 12 ♗f2 ♗xd4! 13 ♗xd4 ♘f5 14 ♘a3 ♘cxd4 15 cxd4 ♕e7 (15...♘e3 does not win material due 16 ♕e1 resulting in a level position) 16 ♘c2 c5 led to an equal position in Lyell-Berzinsh, Coventry 2004.

c) 11...♕g6 12 ♕d2 (I think 12 f5! deserves serious consideration in view of 12...♗xf5 13 ♘xf5 ♗xe3+ 14 ♘xe3 ♘xe5 15 ♕d4 with the advantage) 12...♗xd4 13 cxd4 h5! 14 ♘c3 ♗f5 15 ♗f3 with roughly equal chaces, Azmaiparashvili-I.Sokolov, Dos Hermanas 2001.

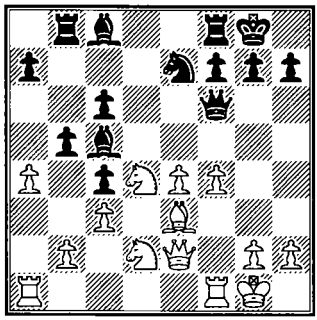
11 ♗xc4 dxc4 12 ♘d2

White gains time developing by attacking the vulnerable c4 pawn.

12...b5 13 a4 c6 14 ♕e2

I suspect that 14 ♕h5 is stronger because it presents Black with serious problems in averting the loss of material. 14...♕d6 is the only move whereupon 15 b4 cxb3 16 ♘2xb3 ♗xd4 17 ♘xd4 bxa4 18 ♖xa4 gives White the better position due to his active pieces.

14...♖b8



15 f5!?

The idea is to shut out the bishop on c8 although it has the the drawback of surrendering control of the e5 square. This should be fine if it means that White can continue making progress on the kingside. The alternative 15 e5 ♕h4 16 ♘4f3 ♗xe3+ 17 ♕xe3 ♕g4 18 ♕xa7 also looks good for White.

15...♖e8

Perhaps 15...♗d7, to co-ordinate the rooks, comes into contention in this position but then 16 ♕f2 ♗b6 17 ♘2f3 threatening e4-e5 is still good for White.

16 ♘2f3 ♕d6

16...h6 allows simply 17 e5 trapping the queen.

17 ♖ad1

The threat is ♘xb5 so Black has to take evasive action.

17...♕c7 18 ♘g5!

The intention is to play ♕h5. What is significant here is the fact that the bishop on c8 has never moved which means that the unprotected rook on e8 becomes a motif for White's tactics.

18....h6

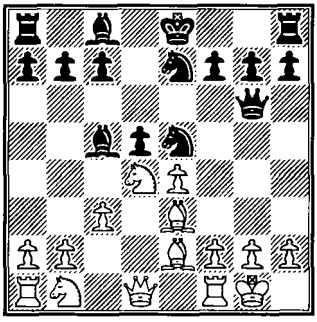
Of course, 18...f6 is met by 19 ♕h5 when the threats to e8 and h7 clinch victory.

19 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 20 ♕h5+ ♔f8 21 f6 1-0

The next game sees a more measured approach from Black who delays the surge with ...d7-d5. Nevertheless, if prepared, White can still assert himself.

Antonio – Isaev
Bled Olympiad 2002

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 ♘e5 8 ♗e2 ♕g6 9 0-0 d5



Simultaneously challenging the centre and introducing the option of ...♗h3.

10 ♗h5!

This attacking move is the only way to give Black a fright and exploit the fact that his king is still in the middle of the board.

10....♕xe4

Well, it looks like a free pawn so Isaev is happy to accept the offer. Instead 10...♗g4 is discussed in the next main game.

11 ♘d2 ♕d3

The black queen attempts to hide from the attention of the white pieces. In the game Fercec-Jakubovic, Pula 1999, 11...♕h4 was tried when 12 ♗xf7+! recovers the pawn. Play continued 12...♘xf7 (or 12...♔xf7 13 ♘4f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♘xf3 ♕h5 15 ♗xc5 giving White the advantage because the black king is exposed) 13 ♘4f3 ♕f6 14 ♗xc5 0-0 15 ♖e1 ♘d6 16 ♗d4 ♕f7 17 ♘g5 with the brighter prospects.

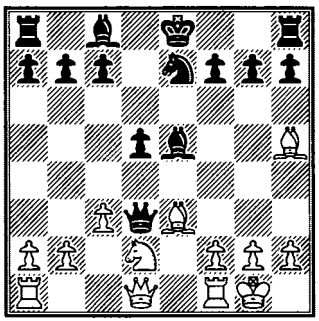
12 ♘4f3

White has sacrificed a pawn in the name of attack so it makes little sense to look for play in the ending with the meek 12 ♘2b3. For instance: 12...♕xd1 13 ♖axd1 ♗d6 14 ♘b5 ♘c4 then offers Black equal chances.

12...♗d6

Isaev has to defend stoutly or he will be swept from the board. This is the case with 12...♗xe3? which grants White an onslaught upon 13 ♘xe5 due to the weakness of Black's king. For instance: 13...♕xd2 14 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 15 ♕f3 ♗h6 (15...♗f4 16 ♖ad1 ♕xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♗xe5 18 ♗xd5 ♗d6 19 ♗xb7 gives White the brighter prospects due to his attacking chances) 16 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 (16...♕xd5 17 ♖ad1 ♗d2 18 ♘f7+ wins) 17 ♖ad1 ♕f4 18 ♕xd5+ ♔e7 19 ♖fe1 with a winning advantage.

13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5



14 ♗c5!

I think this is the best way to justify the pawn sacrifice because Black has long-term problems in activating his pieces. Alternatively 14 ♖e1 ♗d6! 15 ♗g5 ♕f5 16 ♘f3 0-0 17 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 18 ♖xe7 ♕xh5 19 ♖xc7 ♗g4 led to equal chances in Charbonneau-Gajadin, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

14...♗f6

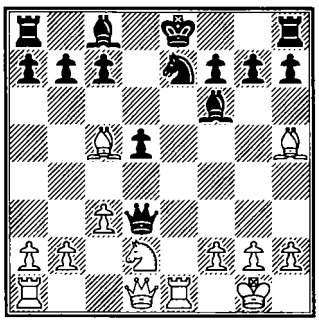
The bishop drops back to look after the knight.

Also possible:

a) 14...g6 15 ♗e2 ♕f5 16 ♖e1 (by the way, the line 16 ♘f3 ♗f6 17 ♖e1 0-0 18 ♗d3 ♕d7 transposes to the main game and is recommended for White) 16...♕d7 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 ♗b5+ c6 19 ♘f3 gave White an edge in Murariu-Bochkarev, Bucharest 2001.

b) 14...♕f5 15 ♖e1 ♗f6 (if 15...g6? then 16 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 17 ♘f3 f6 18 ♕xd5 leaves Black busted) 16 ♕e2 0-0 17 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 (17...♖e8? is met by 18 ♕b5! when 18...♖xe7 allows 19 ♕e8+ ♖xe8 20 ♖xe8 mate) 18 ♕xe7 ♕xh5 19 ♕xc7 ♕g6 20 ♘f1 with an edge.

15 ♖e1



15...g6

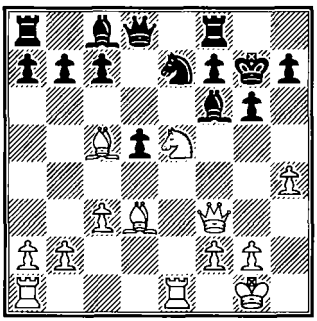
Black is trying to find a way to castle and nudges away the bishop.

Instead 15...♔f8 is a sign that White's opening strategy is working because Black gives up the right to castle and it is still difficult for him to co-ordinate his pieces: 16 ♖e3 ♕b5 17 ♘b3 ♗e6 18 ♕f3 ♕d7?! (Black wants to protect the knight on e7 but this means his pieces become cramped) 19 ♖ae1 ♖e8 20 ♘d4! ♗xd4 21 cxd4 g6 (or 21...b6 22 ♖xe6 wins easily) 22 ♕f6 ♔g8 23 ♗g4 ♘f5 24 ♗xf5 1-0 D.Roberts-E.White, Paignton 2004.

16 ♗e2 f5 17 ♘f3 0-0 18 ♗d3 ♕d7 19 ♘e5 ♕d8

Instead 19...♗xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♘c6 21 ♗b5 is good news for White due to the weak d5 pawn.

20 ♕f3 ♔g7 21 h4!



A surprising but excellent move with the monster threat 22 ♘d7 ♗xd7 23 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 24 ♗d4 mate.

21...♗xh4

21...h5 has been suggested forgetting that the line 22 ♘d7 wins due to 22...♗xd7 23 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 24 ♗d4 mate.

22 ♕f4 ♗f6 23 ♘f3

Once again the hope is for 24 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 25 ♗d4 mate.

23...d4

23...♘g8?! 24 ♗xf8+ ♔xf8 25 ♖e2, intending to double rooks, favours White.

24 ♗c4 b5

Black's plight is revealed if he tries to steal another pawn with 24...dxc3 when White's attack is very strong: 25 ♖ad1 ♕e8 26 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 27 ♗d4+ ♔f5 28 ♗d3+ ♔g4 29 ♖e4+ ♔h5 30 g4 mate.

25 ♗b3 ♗b7

An attempt to catch up on development still leaves Black struggling to cope with White's well-placed pieces.

26 ♖ad1 ♗xf3

26...♕e8, to avoid the pin on the d-file, once again allows the superb 27 ♕xf6+.

27 ♕xf3 ♘f5 28 ♗xf8+ ♕xf8 29 ♗c2

White still has the initiative and a roving queen that causes Black's pawns quite a few problems.

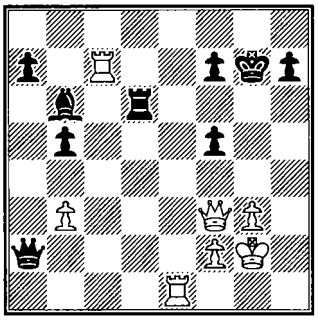
29...♘h4 30 ♕c6 ♖d8

Or 30...dxc3 31 g3 ♘f5 32 ♗xf5 gxf5 33 bxc3 with the advantage

31 g3 ♖d6 32 ♕b7 ♖b6 33 ♕h1 ♘f5 34 ♗xf5 gxf5 35 ♕f3

35 cxd4! is simple and good.

35...♕c5 36 cxd4 ♗xd4 37 b3 ♖d6 38 ♔g2 ♕c2 39 ♖c1 ♕xa2?! 40 ♖xc7 ♗b6

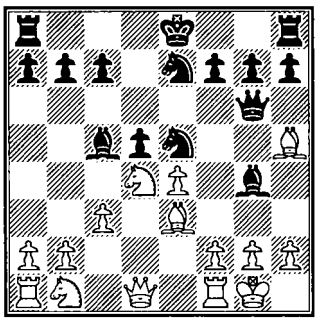


41 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 42 ♕xf5+ ♔g8 43 ♖e8+ ♔g7 1-0

It is worth knowing what to do against 10...♗g4.

Thannhausser – S.Larsen
Corr 2001

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 ♘e5 8 ♗e2 d5 9 0-0 ♕g6 10 ♗h5 ♗g4



Black wants to head for the ending in an effort to stem a possible attack.

11 ♗xg6

The start of a forcing sequence which gives White excellent chances in the ending. In the game Malinin-Rogovski, Zaporozhye 2004, White tried to find a way to keep the queens on the board with 11 ♕a4+ but Black defended comfortably upon 11...♗d7 12 ♘b5 ♕b6! 13 ♗xc5 ♕xb5 14 ♕xb5 ♗xb5 with a level position.

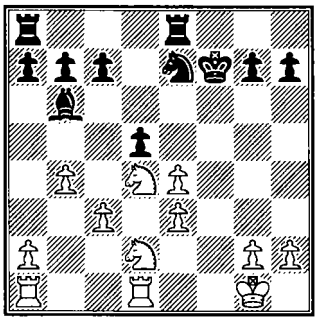
11...♗xd1 12 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 13 ♖xd1 ♘c4

If 13...dxe4 then 14 ♘d2 will recover the pawn and gain time by attacking the bishop.

14 b4!

This is the best way to maintain the initiative despite the doubling of the e-pawns. Instead 14 ♗c1?! dxe4 15 b3 ♘d6 16 ♗a3 ♗b6! is level, Hakki-Husari, Syrian Championship 1992.

14...♗b6 15 ♘d2 ♘xe3 16 fxe3 ♖he8



17 c4!

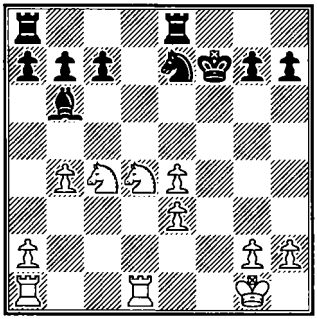
A clever attempt to exchange Black's best piece on b6 by means

of the initial threat of c4-c5. The extra pawn on e3 might look weak but it plays a useful role in protecting the knight on d4.

17...dxc4

After 17...c6 White can safely rid himself of the doubled e-pawn with 18 exd5 when 18...cxd5 19 c5 ♗c7 20 ♘2f3 leaves White with a clear extra pawn.

18 ♘xc4



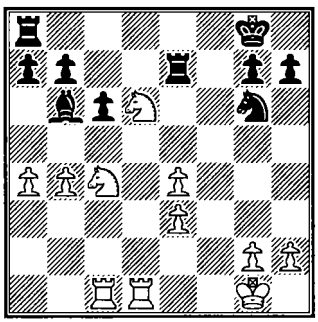
18...♘g6

In this encounter from the semi-final of the Correspondence World Championship Black finally decided to play something different from what had gone before but the resulting positions still favour White. The key game, Rublevsky-Gretarsson, Yerevan Olympiad 1996, is considered the right way to handle the position. It continued 18...♖ad8?! 19 ♘xb6 (or 19 ♘b5? a6! 20 ♘c3 ♗a7 21 ♔f2 ♘c6 22 a3 b5 is about level) 19...axb6 20 ♘b5 ♘c6 (20...♖xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 ♘c6 22 ♖d7+ ♖e7 23 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 24 ♘xc7 ♘xb4 25 ♘d5+ wins) 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 (or 21...♘xd8 22 ♖f1+ ♔g6 23 ♘xc7 ♖xe4 24 ♘d5 winning) 22 ♘xc7 ♖d2 (22...♘xb4 23 ♖f1+ ♔e7 24 ♖b1 ♘d3 25 ♘d5+ ♔e8 26 ♖xb6 is good for White) 23 ♖f1+ ♔g6 24 ♘d5 ♖xa2 25 b5 with a winning advantage. It should be noted that 18...♖ed8 has been put forward as a way to revive Black's position but 19 ♖f1+ is still better for White, e.g. 19...♔g8 20 ♘e6 ♖d3 21 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 22 ♖xd1 ♔f7 23 ♘d8+ ♔e8 24 ♘xb7 when the extra two pawns give White all the chances in the ending.

19 ♘b5 ♖e7 20 ♖ac1 c6

The ending is poor for Black and a casual move such as 20...h6 is punished by 21 ♘xb6 axb6 22 ♖xc7 ♖xa2 23 ♘d6+ ♔e6 24 ♖xe7+ ♘xe7 25 ♘xb7 winning. Or 20...♖xe4 21 ♘xb6 (21 ♘bd6+? cxd6 22 ♘xd6+ ♔g8 23 ♘xe4 ♗xe3+ is level) 21...axb6 22 ♖xc7+ ♖e7 23 ♖d2 with the superior ending.

21 ♘bd6+ ♔g8 22 a4



Thannhausser continues to exert pressure on the queenside while Black remains merely a spectator.

22...♗c7 23 ♘f5 ♖f7 24 b5 cxb5 25 axb5 a5

Larsen might have a passed pawn but without reinforcements he has little hope of achieving much success.

26 b6 ♗d8 27 ♘fd6 ♖e7 28 ♖d5 a4 29 ♖cd1 ♖e6

29...a3 is met by 30 ♘xb7 with a big advantage.

30 e5 a3 31 ♘xb7 ♗xb6 32 ♖d6!

The accurate continuation to make sure that Black has no chances.

32...♗xe3+ 33 ♘xe3 ♖xe5 34 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 35 ♖xd8+ ♘f8 36 ♔f2

White is easily winning due to his extra piece and the fact that the a-pawn is going nowhere.

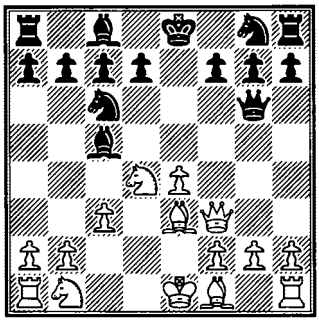
36...♖e7 37 ♘c5 ♖a7 38 ♖d1 ♖a5 39 ♘b3 ♖b5 40 ♘d2 ♖a5 41 ♖a1 a2 42 ♘b3 ♖b5 43 ♘c1 ♖b2+ 44 ♔f3 ♖b1 45 ♘c2 ♔f7 46 ♘xa2 1-0

In the next game Black tries his luck with the key variation 9...d6. Then the solid reply 10 f3 cuts out any counterplay and gives White ample opportunity to create some tactics.

Rublevsky – Onischuk
Poikovsky 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7

If 6...d6 then 7 ♗c4 ♘ge7 transposes to the main line. If instead 7...♘e5 then 8 ♗e2 ♘h6, intending ...♘hg4, can be easily rebuffed with 9 f3. If 6...♕g6 then 7 ♕f3!? crosses Black's plan to upset White's development:



Black has a variety of replies against this modern version of the variation – but it is easy to go wrong:

a) 7...♗xd4 8 cxd4 ♘b4 9 ♘a3 d5 10 exd5 ♘f6 11 d6 cxd6 12 ♗b5+! gives White an edge because Black can't block with the bishop because it would leave the b7 pawn vulnerable.

b) 7...d6?! is obvious but shown to be an error after 8 ♘b5! ♗g4 9 ♕f4 ♗xe3 10 ♕xe3 ♔d7 (the king is terribly placed in the middle of the board and remains a long-term worry but 10...0-0-0? 11 f3 ♗d7 12 ♘xa7+ wins) 11 ♘d2 ♘ge7 12 ♗c4 ♗e6 13 0-0 ♗xc4 14 ♘xc4 ♕h5 15 a4 a6 16 ♘d4 gave White all the chances in Ponomariov-Winants, Neum 2000.

c) On 7...♘xd4, 8 cxd4 makes sense to secure an influential pawn centre (although 8 ♗xd4 has also been tried) and now:

c1) 8...♕b6? is too clever and backfires upon 9 dxc5 ♕xb2

10 ♗c4! ♘f6 11 ♕d1! ♕xa1 12 ♗d4 when the queen is surprisingly trapped.

c2) 8...♗b4+ 9 ♘c3 ♘e7 10 ♗d3 d5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗f4 ♗xc3?! (perhaps Black should wait and keep open the option of exchanging pieces because this would boost the pawn centre so maybe 12...♗g4 when 13 ♕e3 maintains White's slight edge) 13 bxc3 ♗g4 14 ♕e3 gave White the better chances in Movsesian-Romanishin,Kaskady 2002;

d) 7...♘ge7 8 ♘b5! ♗xe3 9 ♕xe3 ♔d8 (Black has given up the right to castle which means in the long-term it will be difficult to co-ordinate his pieces) 10 ♘d2 f5 11 0-0-0 d6 12 ♘c4 ♗d7 13 ♘cxd6! (White has such influence on the d-file that he can get away with this sacrifice which ruins Black's pawn barrier) 13...cxd6 14 ♖xd6 ♕e8 15 ♗c4 ♘e5 16 ♖hd1 ♘7c6 17 ♗e6 and White was on the brink of victory in Baklan - Van Leent, Hoogeveen 2004.

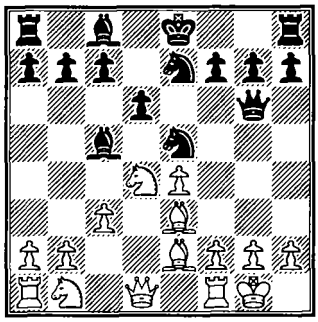
e) 7...♗b6 8 ♘b5! ♘d8 9 ♘d2 is good for White.

f) 7...♘e5 8 ♕e2 ♘h6 (8...♕xe4? 9 ♘d2 ♕g4 10 f3! ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕d8 (11...♕e7 allows 12 ♘f5 and Black's position collapses) 12 ♘b5 ♗e7 13 ♗d4 d6 14 ♗xe5 dxe5 15 ♕xe5 ♔f8 16 ♕xc7 with the advantage) and now:

f1) 9 ♘d2 0-0 10 0-0-0 b6 11 f4 ♗xd4 12 cxd4 ♘eg4 13 h3 ♘xe3 14 ♕xe3 d5 15 f5 ♕c6+ 16 ♔b1 dxe4 ½-½ Fercec-Wells, Bled 2001.

f2) 9 f4 ♘eg4 (now 9...♘c6?! is met by 10 ♘b5! with the advantage) 10 f5 ♕f6 11 ♗g1 0-0 12 ♘d2 ♘e5 13 0-0-0 ♕a6? (Black wants to enter the endgame and hopes his good knight on e5 will compensate for his doubled a-pawns) 14 ♕xa6 bxa6 15 ♘4f3! (White endeavours to exchange Black's best placed piece on e5) 15...♗xg1 16 ♖xg1 ♘hg4 (if 16...♘eg4 then 17 ♖e1 intending h2-h3 is fine for White) 17 h3 ♘xf3 18 gxf3 ♘e3 19 ♖e1 ♘xf1 20 ♖exf1 with the better ending, Ponomariov-I.Sokolov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

7 ♗c4 ♘e5 8 ♗e2 ♕g6 9 0-0 d6



10 f3

I think it is a good idea to advance the f-pawn in order to protect the e4 pawn.

10 ♘d2 is safe but Black can equalise comfortably upon 10...♗h3! 11 ♗f3 0-0 12 ♔h1 ♘xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♗g4 14 ♕g3 ♗d7, Motylev-Malaniuk, Swidnica 1998.

10...0-0

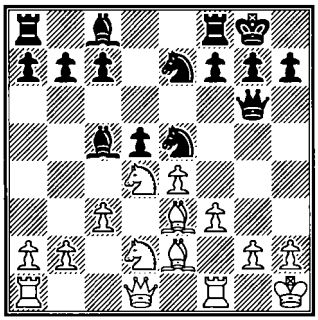
Now 10...♗h3 can be met with 11 ♖f2 followed by ♔h1 when the bishop will have to retreat.

11 ♘d2

The knight is developed and lends support to the e4 pawn. It is worth remembering that 11 ♔h1 merely transposes to the main game after 11...d5 12 ♘d2.

11...d5 12 ♔h1

The king is safer on h1 and makes room for the bishop to retreat to g1 if it should come under attack.



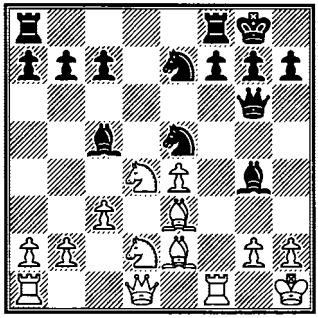
12...♗b6

If 12...dxe4 then 13 fxe4 might leave White with a weakened e-pawn but his pieces are well placed and this makes up for it:

a) 13...♗b6 14 ♗f4 ♘7c6 15 ♗h5 ♕f6 16 ♘2b3 (16 ♗g3!? is worth considering) 16...♕e7 17 ♕c2 ♗d7 18 ♘f5 ♗xf5 19 exf5 ♖ad8 when the position was level in Illescas Cordoba - Karpov, Linares 1992.

b) 13...♘g4 14 ♗g1 ♗d6?! 15 ♘c4! ♘e5 (or 15...♕xe4 16 ♘b5 ♖d8 17 ♘cxd6 cxd6 18 ♘c7 ♖b8 19 ♗f3 ♕c4 20 ♘d5 ♘g6 21 b3 ♕b5 22 ♗xa7 winning) 17 ♗d3 ♕d5 (17...♕c6 allows 18 ♘xa7 with the advantage) 18 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 19 ♖e1 ♕g5 20 ♘xc7 winning) 16 ♘xd6 ♕xd6? (this natural recapture allows White to win a pawn by force but the line 16...cxd6 17 ♘b5 ♕xe4 18 ♘xd6 ♕c6 19 ♕d4 ♘7g6 20 ♖ad1 ♖d8 21 h4! gives White the initiative) 17 ♘b5 ♕c6 18 ♕d4 led to an advantage in Nedev-Upton, Leon 2001.

c) 13...♗g4



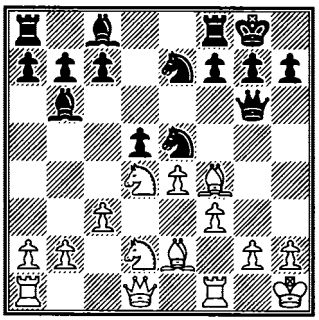
c1) 14 h3 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♖ae8 16 b4 ♗b6 17 a4 (White seeks more space on the queenside so Black needs to respond positively) 17...c5! 18 ♘f5 cxb4 (or 18...♘xf5 19 exf5 ♕c6 20 f6! gives White an edge) 19 cxb4 ♘5c6 20 ♗xb6 ♘xf5 (20...axb6 21 ♕b5 ♘xf5 22 exf5 ♕d6 23 ♘c4 is equal) 21 exf5 ♖xe2 22 fxg6 axb6 23 gxf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 25 ♘c4 when a draw was soon agreed in Charbonneau-Adams, British Team Championship (4NCL) 2005.

c2) 14 ♗f4 and now:

c21) 14...♗xe2 15 ♕xe2 ♗d6 16 ♗xe5 (maybe 16 ♘b5 should be considered) 16...♗xe5 17 ♘2f3 with a level position, Palac-Gyimesi, Rabac 2004.

c22) 14...♗d6 15 ♘b5! ♗xe2 (15...♕h5?! allows White to stop Black's flurry of activity by tactical means: 16 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 17 ♘xd6 cxd6 18 h3 ♘f6 19 ♗xd6 which is excellent for White) 16 ♕xe2 and the chances are level, Kunmerow-Ritter, Dortmund 2003.

13 ♗f4



13...f6

The pawn supports the knight but 13...♕f6 has also been tested. Then 14 ♗g3 when play might continue:

a) 14...c5 15 exd5 (15 ♘c2 ♖d8 16 ♕e1 ♘5g6 17 exd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘e4 led to equal opportunities, Hector-Sargissian, Bled 2002) 15...cxd4 16 ♘e4 ♕f5 17 ♘d6 ♕f6 18 ♘e4 is an elaborate draw by repetition unless Black moves the queen away from defending the knight.

b) 14...♘5g6 15 ♖e1 c6 16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗f1 ♗c7 18 ♗xc7 ♘xc7 19 ♘e4 and the knights in the centre give White a slight edge, Baklan-Smejkal, German Team Championship 1997.

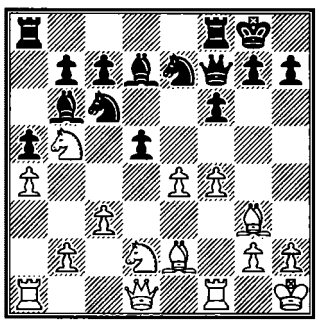
14 ♗g3

The bishop retreats in order to introduce the option of f3-f4 to force the knight away from e5.

14...♕f7 15 a4 a5 16 ♘b5

This explains the thinking behind 15 a4 because if Black had tried 15...a6 then a4-a5 would have secured a space advantage on the queenside. Now that there is no prospect of ...a7-a6 White can plant a knight on b5 to improve the position of his pieces.

16...♗d7 17 f4 ♘5c6?!



This seems perfectly reasonable but it does lead to tactical problems. Instead Black should give up the bishop pair with 17...♗xb5 although 18 axb5 ♘d7 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♗c4 still leaves White with the advantage.

18 f5

White unveils a threat against the c7 pawn while also locking out the light-squared bishop on d7.

I quite like 18 c4! which leaves Black struggling to find a decent reply:

a) 18...dxe4 19 c5! e3 20 ♘f3 ♗xc5 21 ♘xc7 winning.

b) 18...d4? 19 c5! ♗xc5 20 ♘xc7 when the threat to the rook on a8 and the possibility of ♗c4 wins material.

c) 18...♘b4 19 cxd5 ♗xb5 20 ♗xb5 f5 21 ♗c4 fxe4 22 d6 ♘ed5 23 ♘xe4 with a clear advantage.

d) 18...dxc4 19 f5! ♔h8 20 ♗xc4 ♕e8 21 ♗xc7 with a fantastic position.

18...♔h8

After 18...♖ac8 White can step up the pressure with 19 exd5 when 19...♘xd5 allows the strong 20 ♘c4! ♘e3 21 ♘xe3 ♗xe3 22 ♗xc7.

19 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 20 ♘xc7

White has won a pawn directly from the opening which gives the line real credibility considering that Black is rated 2652 and one of the best players in the world.

20...♖ad8 21 exd5 ♘xf5 22 ♕b3 ♘e5 23 ♘c4?!

I suspect that 23 ♕b6!, guarding against the black knight occupying the e3 square, keeps the momentum going and preserves the advantage.

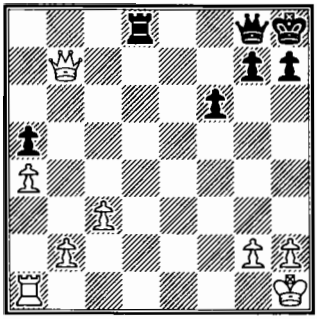
23...♘xc4 24 ♗xc4 ♘e3 25 ♖f3 ♘xc4 26 ♕xc4 ♗c6!?

This is a sneaky move which obliges White to be careful.

27 ♘e6 ♗xd5 28 ♘xd8 ♕g8 29 ♕f4

The best way to extract an advantage is to go after the b-pawn with 29 ♕b5! when 29...♗xf3 30 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 31 ♕xb7 ♖b8 32 ♕a6 ♖xb2 33 ♕xa5 is better for White due to the dangerous passed a-pawn.

29...♗xf3 30 ♕xf3 ♖xd8 31 ♕xb7



31...♖b8

I can't help thinking that time-trouble might be a factor here because 31...♕a2! is a dream move to seize a draw because 32 ♖xa2 allows 32...♖d1 mate and 32 ♖e1 ♕xa4 recovers the material with an equal position.

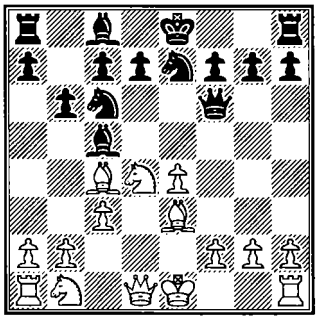
32 ♕c7 ♖xb2 33 ♕xa5 h6 34 h3 ♕c4 35 ♕a8+ ♔h7 36 ♕f3 ♕c5 37 a5 ♖b3 38 ♕d3+ f5 39 ♕d4 ♕c6 40 ♕f4 ♖xc3 41 ♕xf5+ ♔g8 42 a6? ♖c1+ 43 ♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 44 ♔h2 ♕c7+ 45 g3 ♕c4 ½-½

Systems without a quick ...♘e5

The plan of 7...b6, preparing a queenside fianchetto, looks slightly out of place in the opening but has proved to be a robust defence:

Amonatov – Prizant
Vladimir 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 b6!?



Black is preparing to castle queenside and supports the dark-squared bishop. The first time I saw this being played was at Hastings 1991/92 by English grandmaster Jon Speelman. It is now a respected line and supported by a number of leading players, in particular Shirov. Instead 7...♘xd4 has also been tried as a simplifying measure when after 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ 9 ♘c3 play might continue:

a) 9...♕g6 10 ♕f3 d6 11 0-0 0-0 12 a3 ♗a5 13 b4 with a space advantage, Dunis-Meynaud, Nice 2001.

b) 9...♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 0-0 11 0-0 ♕c6 12 ♗d3 d5 13 ♕c2 f5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗d2 ♘b6 16 c4 when the mobile pawn centre and useful bishop-pair gave White the edge in Pavasovic-Markun, Bled 1995.

8 0-0 ♗b7 9 f4

I like this line whose aim is to control the centre and introduce tactics against the black queen. The main alternative is 9 ♘b5 0-0-0 10 ♗xc5 bxc5 11 ♘d2 ♔b8.

For example:

a) 11...a6 12 ♘a3 ♘e5 13 f4 ♘xc4 14 ♘axc4 d5 15 ♕g4+! ♔b8 16 exd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖ae1 ♘g6 18 ♘e4 ♕f5 19 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 20 g3 led to a superior ending due to Black's weakened pawn structure in Jedrzejczak-Matisson, Internet 2001.

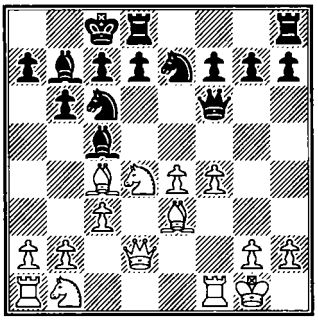
b) 11...♘e5 when play might continue:

b1) 12 ♘xa7+? ♔b8 13 ♘b5 d5 14 exd5 ♘xd5 gives Black good attacking chances thanks to his active pieces, e.g. 15 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 16 f4 ♕d8 17 fxe5 ♖xd2 18 ♕g4 ♕d7! led to an easy victory in De Kaey-Duhayon, Leuven 2003.

12 f4 ♘xc4 13 ♘xc4 d5 14 ♘e5 a6 15 ♕g4+ ♔b8 16 ♘a3 (16 ♘d7+? ♖xd7 17 ♕xd7 axb5 18 e5 ♕e6 19 ♕xb5 is still better for Black in the long-term due to his material advantage of two pieces for the rook) 16...dxe4!? (a risky move but Black is one of the best attacking players in the world so he likes to gamble) 17 ♘d7+ ♖xd7 18 ♕xd7 ♘d5 19 ♘c4! ♘xf4 20 ♘e3

g5 and now not 21 ♕g4? as played in Kristjansson-Shirov, Reykjavik 2003 but instead 21 ♖ad1, to control the d-file and prevent Black from activating his rook, gives White the superior chances.

9...0-0-0 10 ♕d2



The point of this move is to prepare the advance of the central pawns in order to harass the enemy queen but it has been surprisingly seldom played. This will have the bonus of being a surprise for Black who will have to deal with the numerous tactics. If White immediately goes for victory then Black can wriggle out with a timely ...f7-f6 to break up the pawn chain. For instance 10 e5 ♕h6 and now:

a) 11 ♕d2 (the queen must protect the bishop to cancel out the threat of ...♘xe5) 11...f6 12 ♘a3 ♘xd4 13 cxd4 ♗xa3 14 bxa3 ♘f5 15 ♖ac1 fxe5 16 dxe5 ♔b8 17 ♗d3 ♕e6 18 ♖fe1 ♖c8 19 a4 ½-½ Chandler-Speelman, Hastings 1991/92.

b) 11 ♕e2 ♗xd4 12 cxd4 ♘f5 13 ♘c3 ♘cxd4 14 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♕f2 d5! 16 exd6 ♖xd6 when the extra pawn left the position in Black's favour, Zelcic-Goldin, Mallorca Olympiad 2004.

10...g6

Black creates an escape square for the queen.

Alternatives are:

a) 10...♗xd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 ♕e6 13 ♗e2 h5 (or 13...♘f5 14 ♗f2 f6 15 ♘c3 gives White an edge) 14 ♘a3 ♘f5 15 ♘c2 ♔b8 16 ♗f2 f6 17 h4 g6 18 b4 led to a double-edged game where White's space advantage makes it easier to build up an attack, Varga-Blasovszky, Budapest 1994.

b) 10...d6 allows White to make another bid for more space with 11 b4 when 11...♗xd4 12 cxd4 d5 13 e5 ♕g6 (while 13...♕e6 14 ♗e2 ♘f5 15 ♗f2 gives White the advantage) 14 f5! wins.

c) In the circumstances 10...♕g6 seems to be the best chance in order to target the e4 pawn, although 11 ♗d3 reinforces the threat of e4-e5, harassing the queen, or b2-b4, kick-starting the queenside attack.

11 b4 ♗xd4 12 cxd4 d5

This is the traditional way for Black to create counterplay by challenging the centre and getting his bishop into the action after the pawn exchanges.

13 e5 ♕e6 14 ♗e2

Amonatov is a top class player and has sensibly kept the centre closed in the hope that his extra space will make life easier.

14...♘f5 15 ♗f2

The bishop retreats because it needs to keep guard on the d4 pawn.

15...h5 16 a3 f6 17 ♘c3 g5

If 17...fxe5 then 18 fxe5 maintains White's hold on the position.

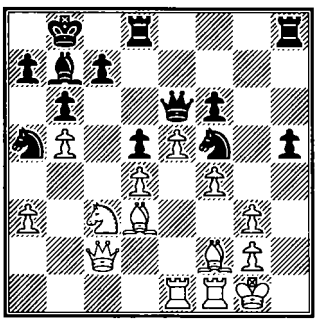
18 ♖ae1 g4 19 b5 ♘a5 20 ♗d3

White has forced the queen's knight to the edge of the board and can now safely install a bishop on d3 which, incidentally, prepares a cunning idea.

20...g3

Black has to be careful because a casual move such as 20...♔b8 runs into 21 ♕c2! ♘g7 22 ♗h4 ♘e8 23 exf6 ♕f7 24 ♗g6 with a winning position, while 20...h4 allows 21 ♕c2 ♘g7 22 f5 with the advantage.

21 hxg3 ♔b8 22 ♕c2!



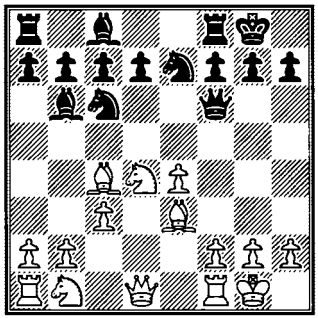
1-0

Resignation is premature but Black's cause is very difficult in view of 22...♘h6 23 f5 ♕e7 24 ♘e2 heading for the f4 square.

Black can also adopt a cautious approach with rapid kingside castling followed by a quiet retreat of the bishop to b6 where it is out of harm's way.

Baklan – I.Sokolov
German Team Championship 2000

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4 0-0 8 0-0 ♗b6



The bishop retreats to avoid any tactics based on a discovered attack after the knight on d4 moves. Instead 8...d6?! 9 ♘xc6! ♘xc6 10 ♗xc5 dxc5 11 f4 (the mobile pawn centre is good for White) 11...♗e6 12 ♗b5 ♖ad8?! 13 ♕h5 gave White the better chances in S.Oliver-Hoang, Canberra 2005. A major alternative is 8...♕g6, to attack the e4 pawn, when after 9 ♘d2 play might proceed:

a) 9...♘e5 10 ♘f5! ♘xf5 11 exf5 ♕c6 Black must protect his bishop 12 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 13 ♗b3 d5 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 (or 14...♘d3 15 ♖e3 ♘xb2 [15...♗xf5 is well met by 16 ♕f3 followed by ♖xd3] 16 ♕h5 ♘c4

17 ♖h3 h6 18 ♖g3 ♘xd2 19 f6! winning) 15 ♕f3 ♘f6 16 g4 ♗d7 17 ♗c2 intending g4-g5 with decent attacking chances, Smyslov-Ioseliani, Prague 1995.

b) 9...♗xd4 10 cxd4 d5! 11 exd5 ♘b4 12 ♘f3 (12 ♗f4 has been tried although 12...♘bxd5 13 ♗e5 c6 14 ♕b3 ♘b6 15 ♗d3 ♗f5 16 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 17 ♖fe1 led to a level position in Rodchenkov-Rjabzev, Essentuki 2003) 12...♘bxd5 13 ♘e5 ♕b6 14 b3 with a slight edge, Geist-Lybin, Internet 2001.

9 ♘a3

This is one way to continue with development and in some cases to help undermine the c7 pawn. Pavasovic-Klovans, Pardubice 2004, saw 9 ♘c2 offering to exchange bishops so that the knight can enter the action via e3 and then d5. That game went 9...♘e5 10 ♗b3 ♗xe3 11 ♘xe3 ♕b6 12 ♕e2 (maybe 12 ♘d2 intending 13 ♘f3 is worth considering) 12...d6 13 ♔h1 ♗e6 14 f4 ♗xb3 15 axb3 ♘d7 16 b4 with equal chances.

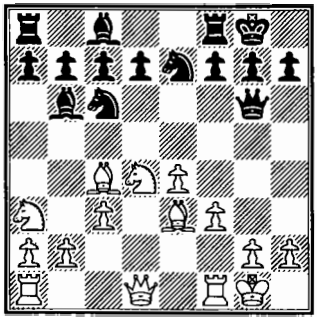
9...♕g6

Also possible is 9...d6 and now:

a) 10 ♕d2 ♕g6 11 f3 (supporting the e-pawn with an advance of the f-pawn is a theme in this variation) 11...♘e5 12 ♗b3 a6 13 ♔h1 offered equal chances in Antal-Rapcsak, Budapest 2005.

b) 10 f4 ♗d7 11 ♘ac2 ♘g6 12 f5!? (White is content to give up control of the e5 square in return for shutting out and denying an active role to the bishop on d7) 12...♘ge5 13 ♗e2 h6 14 ♕e1 ♘e7 15 ♗f2 d5 16 ♗h4 ♕d6 17 f6 ♘7g6 18 exd5 ♕xd5 19 fxg7 led to a strong attack in Granda Zuniga-Roberts, Arequipa 2002.

10 f3



As usual in positions with a queen on g6, the advance of the f-pawn does a good job in protecting the e4 pawn.

10...♘e5

Instead 10...♖d8!? aims to play a quick ...d7-d5 slowing down White's momentum. Then 11 ♘dc2 ♘e5 12 ♗b3 d5 13 ♗xb6 (if 13 exd5 then 13...♘d3 is irritating) 13...♕xb6+ 14 ♔h1 ♗e6 15 ♕d4 left equal chances in Timoschenko-Trabert, Bolzano 2000.

11 ♕e2 ♘xc4 12 ♘xc4 ♗xd4

After 12...d5 White can seize the initiative by 13 ♘xb6 axb6 14 ♘b5! ♕c6 15 ♗f4 with the better chances.

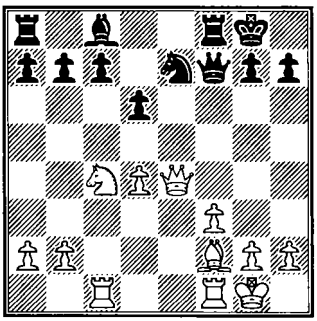
13 cxd4 d6

Black finally makes room for his bishop and prepares ...f7-f5.

14 ♖ac1 f5 15 ♗f2 fxe4 16 ♕xe4!?

This works out well but 16 fxe4 ♗g4 17 ♕e3 ♖f7 18 ♗h4 is also possible with equal chances.

16...♕f7



The ending after 16...♕xe4 17 fxe4 favours White due to his central pawns and the semi-open c-file for his queen's rook.

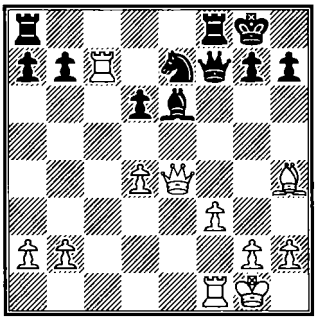
17 ♘xd6!

A clever and finely calculated way to force Black on the defensive.

17...cxd6 18 ♖c7 ♗e6

White has sacrificed a piece so Black's alternatives need to be examined to boost one's confidence in the line. Perhaps 18...♖e8!? is a sterner test for White. For instance: 19 ♖e1 ♗f5! (or 19...d5? 20 ♕e5 b5 21 ♖xe7 is good) 20 ♕xb7 (20 ♕e2 ♘c6 21 ♖xf7 ♖xe2 22 ♖xf5 ♖xb2 with good chances to escape) 20...♗e6 (20...♖eb8? 21 ♖exe7 ♖xb7 22 ♖xf7 ♖xc7 23 ♖xc7 when the extra pawns give White a clear advantage) 21 ♗h4 ♖ab8! (or 21...♗d5 22 ♕b5 a6 23 ♕a5!? ♘c6 [23...♗e6 is met by 24 d5! ♗xd5 25 ♖cxe7 and White is on top] 24 ♖xf7 ♘xa5 25 ♖f5 recovers a piece and secures the advantage) 22 ♕xa7 ♖a8 23 ♕b7 ♖ab8 24 ♕e4 ♗d5! 25 ♕c2 ♕f4! 26 ♖cxe7 ♖xe7 27 ♗xe7 ♕xd4+ 28 ♔h1 ♗xa2 (28...♖xb2?? would be a disaster for Black after 29 ♕c8+ ♔f7 30 ♕f5+ ♔e8 31 ♗f6+) 29 b4 ♗f7 30 ♖d1 ♕xb4 31 ♗xd6 ♕b3 32 ♕c1 with an extra pawn and superior chances.

19 ♗h4!?



19... ♖ae8?!

Black is being careful but should in fact be more adventurous. After the correct 19...d5! White has to be accurate if he is to justify his sacrifice: 20 ♕e2! ♖fe8 21 ♖e1 ♖ac8! 22 ♖xe7 (22 ♖xb7 allows Black to hold on with 22...♖c6) 22...♖xe7 23 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 24 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 25 ♖xe6 ♖c2 26 b3 ♖xa2 27 ♖d6 ♖b2 28 ♖d8+ ♔f7 29 ♖d7+ ♔e6 30 ♖xb7 when, thanks to the extra pawn, it is White who has winning chances.

20 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 22 d5 ♖e8?!

Black is hoping to halt the advance of the pawn and then use his queen to start some counterplay. Instead 22...♖f5! has been suggested to activate the rook whereupon 23 ♕xe6+ (23 dxe6 runs into 23...♖e5 winning the e6 pawn) 23...♕xe6 24 dxe6 ♖e5 25 ♖c1 ♖xe6 26 ♖c7 leaves a likely draw.

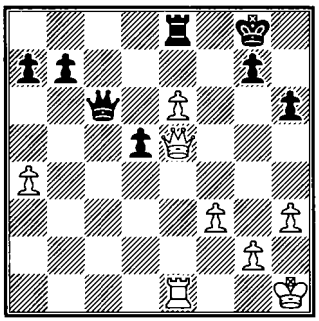
23 ♖e1 ♕f6 24 dxe6 ♕xb2 25 a4 ♕b6+ 26 ♔h1 ♕c6 27 ♕f4!

Baklan wishes to avoid the ending and use his more active pieces to conjure up some attacking chances.

27...♖e7

27...♕d7 is thwarted by 28 ♕g4! with the better chances.

28 h3 h6 29 ♕h4 ♖e8 30 ♕d4 d5 31 ♕e5



31...b6

Before pushing his d-pawn, Sokolov is taking care to protect his pawns from potential attack – but this is a slow plan. Therefore 31...d4! is arguably the best idea to extend the struggle after 32 ♕xd4 ♖xe6 33 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 34 ♕xa7 when, despite his disadvantage, Black still has decent drawing chances.

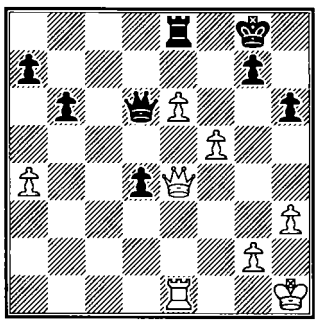
32 f4 d4 33 f5

This is the big difference compared to the note to Black's 31st move – now the e-pawn is protected and White can round up the d-pawn.

33...♕c5 34 ♕e4?!

34 f6 is the star move as 34...gxf6 (or 34...♕xe5 35 f7+ ♔h7 36 ♖xe5 winning) 35 ♕xf6 ♕f8 36 ♕g6+ ♔h8 37 ♖e4 intending ♖h4 leaves White with a clear advantage.

34...♕d6



35 f6! 1-0

Conclusion

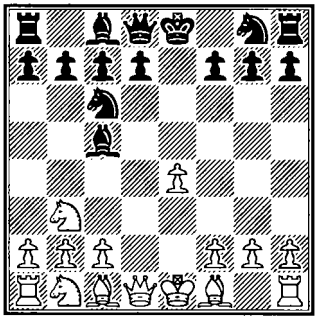
The sharp 5 ♗e3 variation gives White plenty of opportunity for tricks and traps in the opening. Black has to overcome a variety of obstacles before reaching a tense middlegame.

Hernandez Guerrero – Garcia Fernandez is the main line but 8...h5 is an interesting attempt to inject some life into a standard position. White reacts well to the provocation and is soon on top. In the game **Nedev – Sanz Alonso** Black tries 8...d5 which, though considered a risky venture, still needs to be contested. There is a way to try and improve the central advance by playing 8...♕g6 and 9...d5. White offers a pawn with 10 ♗h5 which is eagerly accepted by Black in the game **Antonio – Isaev**. This is a chance to see how White should handle the situation and construct a rapid attack. The possible improvement 10...♗g4 comes under the microscope in the game **Thannhausser – S.Larsen** where it soon becomes clear that the ending favours White. **Rublevsky – Onischuk** examines 9...d6 which is a main line where I think 10 f3 is the simplest reply. The lines without an early ...♘e5 must be taken seriously and **Amonatov – Prizan**t is an entertaining game. The idea of 7...b6 has become popular and needs to be treated with respect, so 10 ♕d2 seems the most promising. A cautious approach is kingside castling followed by a retreat of the bishop to b6 which is discussed in **Baklan – I.Sokolov**.

Classical Variation:

4...♗c5 5 ♘b3

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3



History

Over the years this line has been adopted by some great players but only recently has it become very popular. I managed to trace one example from 1876 by the eminent English player Joseph Henry Blackburne (1841-1924) which shows how highly thought of it was in the early stages of the evolution of the Scotch. In the 1950s it emerged from the shadow of the Ruy Lopez to be played by future world champion Tigran Petrosian. It was also around this time that professionals such as Bilek and Wade increased the stature of the line. This encouraged a number of other strong players, including Kupreichik and Ljubojevic, to add to its growing reputation. Perhaps its keenest adherent from the 1980s to the present day is Dutch grandmaster John Van der Wiel who has added much to the understanding of the line. Since the 1990s there have been plenty of top players giving it a go with the best of the current crop being Baklan and Rublevsky.

The Basic Plan for White

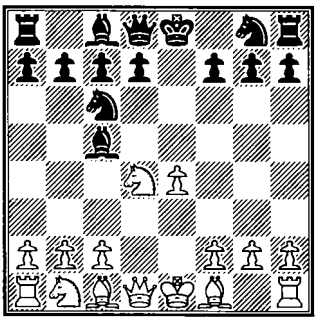
I have tried to make things easier for White by choosing a familiar system against the main lines. After 5...♗b6 I basically propose the set-up of ♘c3 followed by the development of the dark-squared bishop and queen to facilitate queenside castling. Of course a lot depends on Black's set-up but this simple plan seems to work well in practice. The key to the line is that gives White a solid basis on which to shift the main struggle to the middlegame where White's traditional space advantage will provide ample scope for piece manoeuvres.

The Basic Plan for Black

Black's immediate aim is to rapidly develop his kingside and castle. The task of coping with queenside castling is awkward so it is preferable to create counterplay with ...a7-a5 in an effort to dislodge the knight on b3. A general rule here is that when White plays a2-a4 to hassle the dark-squared bishop on b6 then ....a7-a6 is the best way to provide an escape square.

Baklan – Billot
Metz 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5

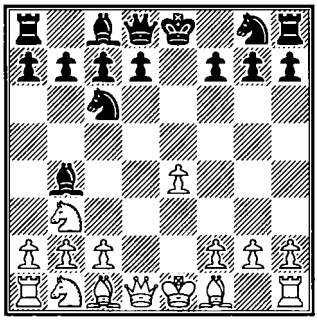


5 ♘b3

The knight retreats and gains time by attacking the bishop. I would have liked to revive 5 ♘f5 but 5...d5! is currently making the line a risky project for White. For instance: Puntier-D'Amore, Mallorca Olympiad 2004, continued 6 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 7 ♘h5 ♕h4 8 ♘g3 ♘f6! 9 ♗e2 (9 exd5 allows 9...♘g4 when a sample line runs 10 dxc6 ♗xf2+ 11 ♔e2 ♗xg3 12 ♕d4 ♕e7+ 13 ♔f3 ♗e5 and White is in trouble) 9...dxe4 10 b4?! (this latest ploy to complicate matters fails to impress) 10...♗xb4+ 11 c3 ♗c5 12 ♗a3 ♗xa3 13 ♘xa3 ♕f4 14 ♘c4 ♗e6 with the advantage.

5...♗b4+

A relatively unusual continuation because 5...♗b6 is the main line and is discussed in the rest of the chapter.



6 ♗d2

Baklan is a top class grandmaster so his choice to exchange bishops must be reasonable. He has also tried 6 c3 which is the main alternative. After 6...♗e7 play might continue:

a) 7 ♗f4 It is not always clear where the dark-squared bishop should develop and depends on Black's set-up so this move has dipped in and out of fashion: 7...d6 8 c4 ♘f6 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗e2 ♘d7 11 ♘d5 b6 12 0-0 ♘c5 13 f3 (maybe 13 ♖e1!? is worth a try because 13 ..♘xe4?! allows 14 ♗f3 f5 15 ♗xe4 fxe4 16 ♖xe4 with an

edge) 13...♗f6 14 ♕d2 led to equal chances in Baklan-Grischuk, Yerevan 2001.

b) 7 c4 ♗f6 8 ♗d3 d6 9 0-0 ♘ge7 10 ♘c3 (if White is uncomfortable with doubled c-pawns then he can contemplate 10 a3 0-0 11 ♕c2 followed by ♘c3 with roughly equal chances) 10...♗xc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 ♘d4 f5 13 f4 ♘xd4 14 cxd4 fxe4 15 ♗xe4 d5! (Black finds an easy route to equality by challenging White's pawn centre) 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗a3 ♖f7 18 ♕b3 ♘f6 19 ♗d3 ♕xd4+ 20 ♔h1 ♗e6 21 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 22 ♕xe6 ♔g8 23 ♖ad1 ♕a4 24 ♕h3 ½-½ Movsesian-Landa, Tripoli 2004.

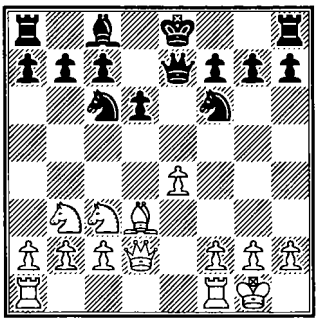
6...♕e7

The queen protects the bishop in order to maintain the tension and not to take on d2 unless provoked so as not to fall behind on development after 6...♗xd2+ 7 ♕xd2 intending ♘c3 and 0-0-0. Instead 6...a5 to support the bishop has been tested: 7 a3 ♗e7 (7...♗xd2+ 8 ♕xd2 ♘f6 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗b5 d6 11 0-0 ♗d7 12 ♖fe1 ♘e5 13 f4 aiming to play a timely e4-e5 gave White the edge in Baklan-Sargissian, Batumi 2002) 8 ♘c3 (or 8 ♗e3 ♗f6 9 ♘d4 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 d5 11 e5 ♗e7 is about level, Efimov-Romanishin, Reggio Emilia 2001) 8...a4 9 ♘c1 ♘f6 10 ♘d3 d6 (if 10...0-0 then 11 e5 ♘e8 12 ♕h5 intending to castle queenside is promising) 11 ♘f4 0-0 12 ♗b5 ♘d4 13 ♗d3 led to equal play in Zelcic-Romanishin, Spilt 2002.

7 ♗d3 ♘f6

Black sensibly activates his kingside. The instant challenge to the centre with 7...d5?! is not such a good idea if it opens the e-file when there is a queen on e7: 8 0-0 ♗xd2 (8...dxe4 9 ♗xe4 ♗e6 [9...♕xe4 is hopeless due to 10 ♖e1 pinning the queen] 10 ♕f3 is good news for White) 9 exd5 ♗b4 10 dxc6 ♔f8 (10...bxc6 11 c3 ♗d6 12 ♖e1 ♗e6 13 ♘d4 ♕d7 14 ♗c4 is winning) 11 ♘1d2 ♘f6 12 ♘c4 bxc6 13 ♕f3 with the better chances, Welz-Schmidt, Berlin 1999.

8 0-0 ♗xd2 9 ♕xd2 d6 10 ♘c3



White simply catches up on development and steers the battle towards the middlegame.

10...♗g4 11 ♖ae1

I quite like 11 ♘d5 since 11...♘xd5 12 exd5 ♘e5 13 ♖ae1 intending f2-f4 is excellent.

11...0-0-0 12 f4 h5?!

Billot decides that having castled on the opposite wing he needs to throw his kingside pawns forward. However 12...♖he8 is the sensible choice when 13 ♘d5 maintains White's plus.

13 h3 ♗d7 14 ♘d5 ♕f8 15 c4

White increases his space advantage and Black has a dour defensive task.

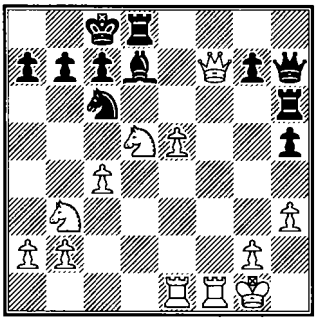
15...♖h6 16 ♕f2 ♕h8 17 e5

White strives for a breakthrough in the centre which is particularly good now that the black queen is in a remote corner of the board.

17...dxe5?

A clear error because Black does not want to open the f-file. 17...♘h7 is met by 18 ♘a5! ♔b8 (or 18...♘xa5 19 ♕xa7 wins) 9 ♘xc6+ ♗xc6 20 b4 with decent attacking chances.

18 fxe5 ♘h7 19 ♗xh7 ♕xh7 20 ♕xf7



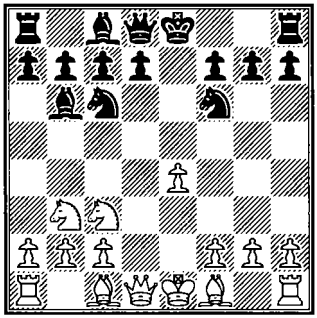
Baklan is a pawn up with a very strong passed e-pawn ensuring a clear advantage.

20...♕d3 21 e6 1-0

Of course, the standard reply is 5...♗b6.

Palac – Vucic
Neum 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6



The king's knight is brought into the action and Black prepares to castle.

7 ♕e2!?

This is a relatively new move so it is likely to catch out quite a few people. The reason for the queen to be on e2 is to make way for rapid queenside castling prior to initiating an attack. Instead Tregubov-Dashibalov, Tomsk 2003, followed a more traditional route starting with 7 ♗d3 when the game continued 7...d6 8 0-0 ♗e6 9 ♘a4 h6 10 ♘xb6 axb6 11 ♖e1 with equal chances.

7...d6

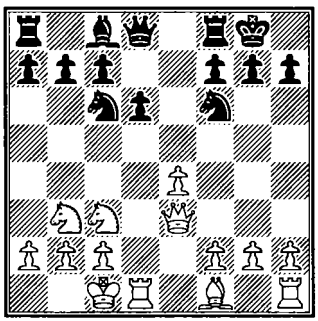
The d-pawn prevents White from safely playing e4-e5 and allows the light-squared bishop to develop. In the game Rublevsky-Anand, Bastia rapidplay 2004, 7...0-0 was tested when play continued 8 ♗g5 h6

(8...♖e8 9 0-0-0 d6 10 ♘d5 ♖xe4 11 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 12 ♗xf6 ♖xe2 13 ♗xe2 gxf6 14 ♖hf1 with a clear advantage, Hoeglinger-Kagerer, Muehlv 2000) 9 h4?! (9 ♗h4 is a simple alternative to maintain the tension but the need to play aggressively with a quick time control leads to careless play) 9...d6 10 f3? hxg5 11 hxg5 ♘g4!? (11...♘h7 12 f4 g6 13 0-0-0 is double-edged) 12 fxg4 ♕xg5 13 ♕f3 ♗xg4 14 ♕g3 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 f5 16 exf5 ♕xf5 17 0-0-0 ♗xe2 18 ♘xe2 ♕f2 19 ♕h2 ♕xe2 20 ♕h8+ ♔f7 21 ♖df1+ ♗f2 22 ♕h7 ♔e6 23 ♔b1 ♕g4 0-1 Rublevsky-Anand, Bastia 2004.

8 ♗e3 ♗xe3

Perhaps 8...♗e6 is worth checking out although 9 0-0-0 offers level chances.

9 ♕xe3 0-0 10 0-0-0



Palac has completed the opening and the position is roughly level. The plan for White is to seek concessions from Black by advancing the kingside pawns.

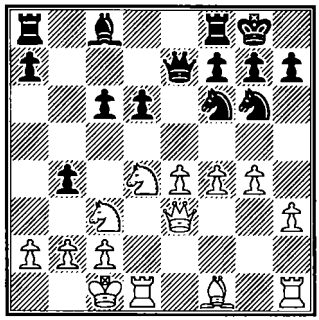
10...♕e7 11 f3

Palac prepares the accepted plan in this sort of position by preparing a kingside pawn advance to engineer attacking prospects.

11...♘e5 12 g4 c6 13 h3

An odd-looking move but White is preparing f3-f4 to oust the centralised knight on e5.

13...b5 14 f4 ♘g6 15 ♘d4 b4



If 15...♗d7 then White can grab more space with 16 g5 when 16...♘e8 17 h4 guarantees decent attacking chances.

16 ♘xc6!

The start of a forcing combination to extinguish Black's counterplay.

16...♕b7 17 ♘d5 ♕xc6 18 f5

Of course, the knight on g6 cannot safely move due to the threat of 19 ♘e7+.

18...♘xd5 19 exd5 ♕a4 20 fxg6 ♕xa2

Black hopes to menace the white king but without reinforcements this represents a lightweight attack.

Instead 20...hxg6 is met by 21 ♗c4 when a sample line runs 21...♗b7 22 ♕f4 ♕d7 23 h4 with the initiative.

21 gxh7+ ♔h8

If 21...♔xh7 then 22 ♕e4+ ♔g8 23 ♕xb4 works out well for White who is threatening the pawn on d6 and can also boost the defence with ♗c4 to chase away the black queen.

22 ♕d4 ♕a1+ 23 ♔d2 ♕a5 24 b3

I think this is a special case where White can allow his king to wander around the board with minimum risk. This is because the text blocks the option of ...b4-b3+ and prepares ♗c4 to close the semi-open c-file.

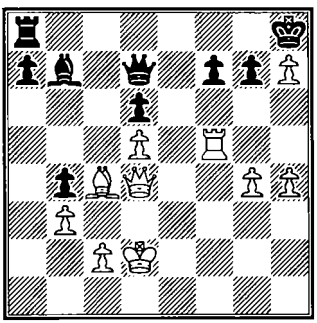
24...♗b7 25 ♗c4 ♕d8 26 h4

Now that the white king is relatively secure the attack can continue.

26...♖e8 27 ♖df1 ♕d7 28 ♖f5

White prepares to double rooks with excellent play.

28...♖e5 29 ♖hf1 ♖xf5 30 ♖xf5



30...♔xh7?

Vucic is keen to restore the material level but the pawn on h7 is at least providing a shield to the white pieces. This defence has now been voluntarily broken and so the white pieces can swarm towards the black king.

31 ♗d3 ♔g8

31...g6, to block the prospect of a discovered attack, makes no difference upon 32 ♖h5+ ♔g8 33 ♖h8 mate.

32 ♖g5

The direct attack means that Black is busted.

32...f6

Or 32...g6 33 ♗xg6 fxg6 34 ♖xg6+ ♔h7 35 ♕f6 and nothing can stop mate.

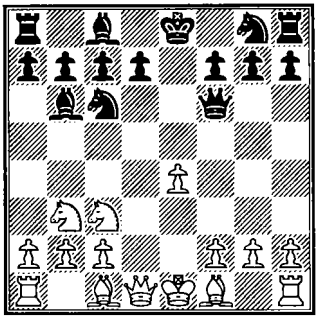
33 ♕xf6 ♗xd5 34 ♕g6 ♕f7 35 ♕h7+ ♔f8 36 ♖f5 1-0

The Croatian grandmaster is also featured in the next game where Black varies with 6...♕f6 but White manages to find a way to stick to the basic plan and quickly castle queenside.

Palac – Kostic
Nice 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 ♘c3 ♕f6

The direct approach threatening mate in one.



7 ♕e2

Palac defends the threat to f2 but also keeps with the basic plan of preparing to castle queenside.

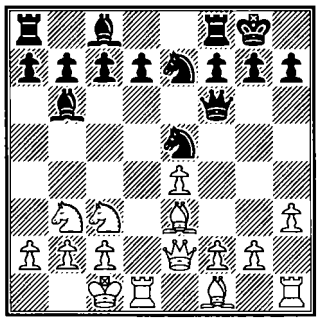
7...♘ge7 8 ♗e3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♘e5!?

The knight is centralised and cannot easily be budged with 10 f2-f4 for tactical reasons. For example: 9...d6 10 h4 – as usual in this line White is keen to charge with the kingside pawns – when play might continue:

a) 10...♗e6 11 f3 (as usual White prepares to expand his pawns on the kingside) 11...♗c4 12 ♕d2 ♗xe3 13 ♕xe3 ♗xf1 14 ♖dxf1 ♖fe8 15 g4 a5 16 a3 a4 17 g5 ♕e5 18 f4 ♕e6 19 ♘d4 ♕c4 20 ♘db5! when White has contained the counterplay and is poised to continue the kingside attack, Diaz-Flores, Buenos Aires 2001.

b) 10...♗d7 11 f3 ♗xe3+ 12 ♕xe3 a5 13 g4 a4 14 g5 ♕e6 15 ♘d2 (15 ♗h3?! is premature due to 15...f5! 16 gxf6 ♕xf6 17 ♗xd7 axb3 gives Black a slight edge) 15...d5? (15...♖fd8 is the best chance to protect the bishop when 16 ♗h3 can be met by 16...f5) 16 ♗h3 f5 (16...♕d6 allows 17 exd5 with a clear advantage) 17 gxf6 ♕xf6 18 exd5 (if 18 ♗xd7 then 18...d4 gets the piece back) 18...♗xh3 19 ♖xh3 ♘f5 20 ♕g5 with the advantage, Kupreichik-Eslon, Wijk aan Zee 1977.

10 h3



A little precaution before trying to oust the knight from its central post by f2-f4. This is because 10 f4 is met by 10...♘g4! when 11 ♗xb6 allows 11...♕xf4+ 12 ♔b1 axb6 with a slight edge.

10...c6 11 ♔b1 d6 12 f4 ♘c4

If the knight retreats White can seize the initiative: 12...♘5g6 13 f5 ♘e5 14 g4 h6 15 ♗xb6 axb6 16 h4 intending g4-g5 gives White a decent attack.

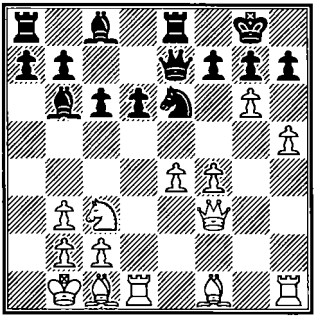
13 ♗c1 ♘a5 14 g4

It does look rather obvious but the kingside pawn avalanche is difficult to meet.

14...♘xb3 15 axb3 ♘g6 16 g5 ♕e7 17 h4

It should be clear by now that White is banking on a kingside pawn storm to unhinge Black's defence.

17...♖e8 18 ♕f3 ♘f8 19 h5 ♘e6 20 g6



20...d5?!

Black is going for complications to distract the attack. The ploy of trying to block the onslaught with 20...h6 is advantagously met by 21 ♗c4.

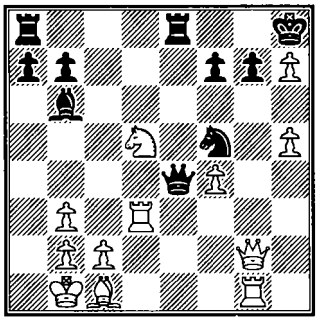
21 gxh7+ ♔h8

A well known idea to hide the king behind the pawn but now White can aim to lever open the rest of Black's pawn barrier.

22 exd5 ♘d4 23 ♕g2 ♗f5 24 ♗d3

White easily copes with Black's flurry of activity by offering to exchange the light-squared bishops.

24...♗xd3 25 ♖xd3 cxd5 26 ♖g1 ♘f5 27 ♘xd5 ♕e4



Kostic cannot handle the pressure of the attack and elects to exchange queens. This is a sorry state of affairs because his material deficit means that the endgame will be a bleak experience.

28 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 29 ♘xb6 axb6 30 ♖d7 ♖e7 31 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 32 ♖d1 ♔xh7 33 ♖d7 ♖e8 34 ♖xb7

White restores the two pawn lead and can look forward to victory.

34...♔h6 35 ♖xb6+ ♔xh5 36 ♖b5+ ♔g6 37 ♖e5 f6 38 ♖e3 ♔f7 39 b4

The connected queenside pawns are very strong and can be supported by the pieces so Black is just going through the motions.

39...♖b8 40 ♖b3 ♘f5 41 c4 ♘d6 42 c5 ♘b5 43 ♖d3 ♔e6 44 ♔c2 ♔f5 45 ♔b3 ♔e4 46 ♔c4 1-0

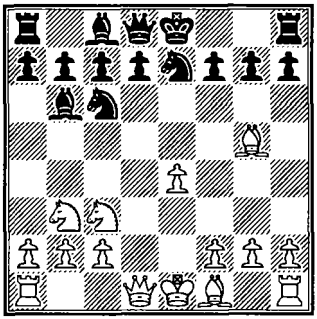
The big test for the line is when it comes up against someone of world class stature. In the following game White does not manage to win but at least it is a reminder that the opening is a solid choice against anyone:

Rublevsky – Anand
Dortmund 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 ♘c3 ♘ge7

As usual in this line Black brings the knight out to prepare to castle kingside.

7 ♗g5



White pins the knight and as usual in this line prepares rapid queenside castling.

7...0-0

Black just carries on developing.

Also possible are:

a) 7...f6 8 ♗h4 0-0 9 ♗c4+ ♔h8 10 g4?! (a loose-looking move so 10 ♕d2 followed by 0-0-0 is a reasonable alternative) 10...♕e8 11 ♗e2 with a slight edge for Black because White's pawn structure is not quite right because it is not easy to convert into an attack, Mariotti-Tatai, Rome 1977.

b) 7...d6 8 ♕d2 (this is similar to the main game where White endeavours to castle queenside) 8...h6 9 ♗h4 ♗e6 10 ♘d5 0-0 (if 10...♕d7 then 11 ♗b5 is an awkward pin for Black to endure) 11 0-0-0 ♗xd5 12 exd5 ♘e5 13 f4 ♘5g6 14 ♗xe7 (14 ♗f2?! is met by 14...♘xd5! winning a pawn) 14...♕xe7 15 ♖e1 ♕d7 16 g3 a5 17 a3 a4 18 ♘d4 ♖a5 19 ♗g2 led to roughly equal chances in Janssen-Przewoznik, Graz 1981.

8 ♕d2

Rublevsky follows the accepted formula of preparing queenside castling in the hope of creating tactical chances on the king's flank. Of course this policy should reap dividends against most opponents – but against Anand, a world title aspirant, it will be a tougher task!

8...d6 9 0-0-0 f6

Black breaks the pin to cancel out the effectiveness of ♘d5. Alternatively 9...♗e6 10 f4 f5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 12 ♗c4+ ♔h8 13 ♖he1 ♕d7 14 h3 h6 15 ♗h4 (15 ♗xe7! looks good when 15...♘xe7 16 g4 ♗h7 17 f5 is better for White who has attacking opportunities) 15...♖ae8? (15...♘g6 is necessary) 16 g4 ♗xg4 17 hxg4 ♕xg4 18 ♗g5! ♘g6 19 ♗e2 led to a winning advantage, Barkidzija-Horvat, Zagreb 1996.

10 ♗h4 a5

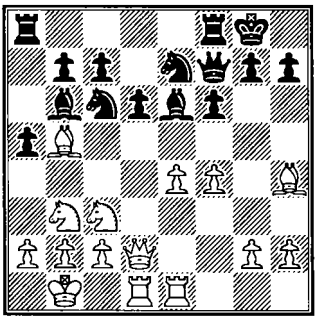
Anand introduces the possibility of ...a5-a4 to disturb the knight on b3 and disrupt White's harmony.

11 ♗b5 ♗e6 12 f4

Now that White has made sure the black a-pawn cannot safely

advance, he tries to engineer some attacking chances on the kingside.

12...♕e8 13 ♔b1 ♕f7 14 ♖he1



14...♗c4

Anand finds a clever way to make possible the advance ...a5-a4 by exchanging the light-squared bishops.

15 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 ♕xd5+

Instead 17 exd5 is met by 17...a4 18 dxc6 axb3 19 cxb3 ♕xc6 with a slight edge for Black because the semi-open a-file will assist the attack.

17...♕xd5 18 exd5 a4!

A high class move to thwart White's potential initiative in the ending if the black knight retreats. Instead 18...♘d8 is advantageously met by 19 ♘d4 heading for the e6 square.

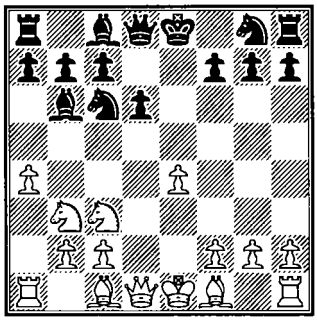
19 dxc6 axb3 20 axb3 bxc6 21 ♖e2

The game is heading for a draw which is testimony to Anand's skill at curbing the opponent's attacking ambitions. 21 ♖e7 ♖f7 22 ♖de1 ♔f8 is also level.

21...♖fe8 22 ♖de1 ½-½

Zhang Pengxiang – Moradiabadi
Dubai 2005

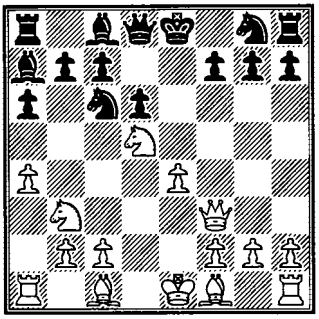
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 a4



To threaten the bishop with a4-a5 and if Black creates an escape square then ♘d5 will force a retreat to avoid a buckled pawn structure.

7...a6 8 ♘d5 ♗a7 9 ♕f3!?

This queen excursion has recently been revived and has had encouraging results. It opens up opportunities to probe Black's kingside by ♕g3 targeting the g7 pawn. In the next game we explore the traditional 9 ♗e3 which offers White a pleasant alternative.



9...♗e6

Black develops the light-squared bishop but there are plenty of alternatives:

a) 9...♘ge7 10 ♗g5 ♗e6 11 0-0-0 ♗xd5 12 exd5 ♘e5 13 ♕e2 h6 (or 13...0-0 14 f4 ♘5g6 15 f5 ♘e5 16 f6 is good for White) 14 ♗e3 ♗xe3+ 15 ♕xe3 ♕d7 16 f4 ♘g4 17 ♕f3 ♘f6 18 a5 0-0 19 ♖g1 intending g2-g4 with roughly equal chances, Mamedyarov-Onischuk, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

b) 9...♘e5 10 ♕g3

b1) 10...♘g4 11 ♕c3 (a neat move which hits the c7 and g7 pawns) and now:

b12) 11...♘xf2 12 ♕xg7 (I suspect 12 ♘xc7+!? needs to be investigated. For example: 12...♔f8 13 ♘xa8 ♘xh1 14 ♗f4 (threatening 15 ♗xd6+ when 15...♕xd6 allows 16 ♕xc8+) 14...♗g4 15 ♕a5! ♕e7 16 ♗d3 ♘f2 17 ♕c7 with the advantage) 12...♕h4 13 ♘xc7+ (13 ♕xh8 ♘xe4+ 14 ♔d1 ♗g4+ 15 ♗e2 ♘f2+ 16 ♔d2 0-0-0 gives sufficient compensation thanks to the poorly placed white king) 13...♔d7 14 ♘xa8 ♘xh1+ 15 g3 ♕xh2 16 ♗h3+ ♕xh3 17 ♗f4 ♗f2+ 18 ♔d2 ♕g2! 19 ♕xf7+ (or 19 ♕g4+ ♔d8 20 ♕h4+ ♘e7 21 ♕xh1 ♗e1+! wins) 19...♘e7 20 ♖d1 ♕f3! 21 ♕c4 ♘xg3 22 ♕c7+ ♔e6 23 ♕xd6+ ♔f7 0-1 Camacho-Valdes, Havana 1998.

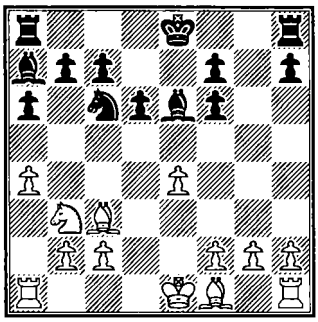
b13) 11...♔f8 12 ♕xc7 ♗e6 13 ♕xd8+ (13 ♗e2 is also possible when 13...♘xf2 14 ♖f1 ♘xe4 15 ♕xb7 gives White an edge) 13...♖xd8 14 ♗e3 ♗xe3 15 ♘xe3 ♘xe3 16 fxe3 ♗xb3 17 cxb3 ♘f6 18 ♗c4 ♖e8 19 0-0-0 ♘xe4 20 ♖hf1 with equal chances, Krstic-Socko, Pula 1998.

b2) 10...♘g6 11 ♗g5 f6 12 ♗e3 ♗xe3 13 ♘xe3 ♘h6 (13...♘8e7 is met by 14 ♗c4 to deny kingside castling which is irritating to Black who cannot easily castle queenside either) 14 ♗c4 ♕e7 15 f3 ♗e6 16 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 17 ♘d4 ♕f7 18 ♘d5 (18 0-0!? is worth considering) 18...0-0-0 19 0-0-0 offers level chances, Sosulin-Gusev, Donskoj 2002.

10 ♗d2

White wants to install his bishop on c3 to increase the pressure on the kingside. 10 ♕g3 g6?! (an instinctive reaction but flawed – instead 10...♗xd5 11 exd5 ♘b4 12 ♕xg7 ♕f6 13 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♗d3 ♘xd3+ 15 cxd3 ♘xd5 16 ♗d2 ♔d7 slightly favours Black) 11 ♗g5 (if 11 ♕c3 f6 12 ♗c4 threatening ♘xc7+ looks good) 11...f6 12 ♗d2 ♕d7 13 ♗e2 0-0-0 14 0-0 ♕f7 15 c4 led to a slight plus in Krstic-Bradaric, Zadar 2000.

10...♘f6 11 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 12 ♕xf6 gxf6 13 ♗c3



Now I have to admit that not everyone will want an ending straight after the opening. However the opponent's doubled, isolated f-pawns should offer White the better long-term prospects.

13...♔e7 14 ♖d1 ♖hg8 15 ♘d4 ♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♖xd4 f5

It is a good idea to get rid of the doubled pawns at the first opportunity in a bid for equality.

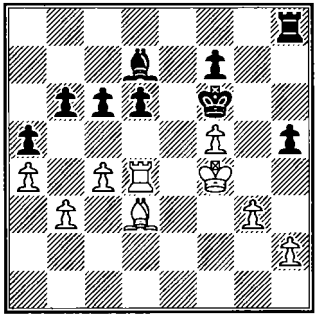
18 exf5 ♗xf5 19 ♔d2

White will now activate his pieces before trying to make progress.

19...c6 20 g3 ♖g4 21 ♖xg4 ♗xg4 22 ♗d3 h6 23 ♖e1+ ♗e6 24 ♖e4 a5 25 ♖h4 ♖h8 26 ♔e3 ♔f6 27 f4 ♔g7 28 f5!

It might only make a slight difference but White finds a way to reduce the effectiveness of the light-squared bishop.

28...♗c8 29 ♔f4 ♗d7 30 b3 b6 31 ♔f3 ♔f6 32 c4 ♔e5 33 ♖e4+ ♔f6 34 ♔f4 h5 35 ♖d4



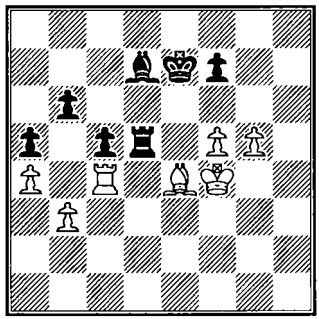
35...d5?!

A misguided attempt to confuse matters but it backfires. Instead 35...♔e7 36 f6+ ♔xf6 37 ♖xd6+ ♔e7 38 ♖d4 is level.

36 cxd5 c5 37 ♖c4 ♖e8 38 h3

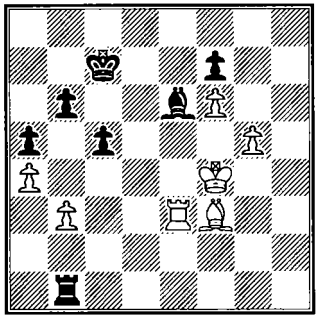
38 ♖e4 looks a stronger choice.

38...♖e5 39 g4 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♖xd5 41 g5+ ♔e7 42 ♗e4



White certainly has all the winning chances because he can create a passed pawn on the kingside. Then again, it is not easy to convert that into victory.

42...♖d1 43 ♔e5 ♖e1 44 f6+ ♔d8 45 ♔d6 ♖d1+ 46 ♔e5 ♖e1 47 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 48 ♗f3 ♗e6 49 ♖c3 ♖b1 50 ♖d3+ ♔c7 51 ♖e3



The desire to win the b-pawn allows sharp tactics.

51...♔d6

The ending is proving to be irritating for Black because grabbing a pawn is a poor choice. For instance: 51...♖xb3 52 ♖xe6 fxe6 53 f7 is conclusive and 51...♗xb3 52 g6 fxg6 53 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 54 f7 also decides.

52 ♖d3+ ♔c7 53 ♗d1

A slight inaccuracy but it is enough to give White another lease of life.

53...♖c1?!

Instead 53...♖b2 should hold the draw because 54 ♔e5 runs into 54...♖g2 when 55 ♔f4 only goes to show that White is struggling to make progress.

54 ♔e5

The threat is g5-g6.

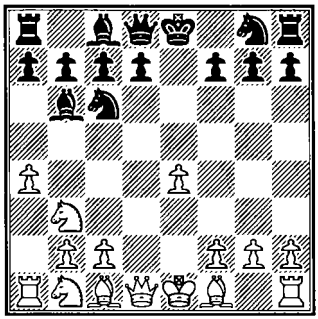
54...c4 55 bxc4 ♖xc4 56 ♗b3 ♖c5+ 57 ♔f4 ♗xb3 58 ♖xb3 ♖c4+ 59 ♔f5 ♖c5+ 60 ♔g4 ♖c4+ 61 ♔h5 ♖xa4? 62 ♖e3 ♖d4 63 ♖e7+ ♖d7 64 ♖xd7+ 1-0

Black resigned in view of 64...♔xd7 65 g6 fxg6+ 66 ♔xg6 ♔e8 67 ♔g7 and the pawn will promote.

The next game is a chance to play something different in this line because White tries 9 ♗e3. It also gives us a chance to explore the old idea of playing an early a2-a4 in the opening:

Van der Wiel – Straeter
German Team Championship 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 a4



This is a speciality of the Dutch grandmaster and is designed to weaken Black's queenside. It is a solid variation with possibilities of aggressive play.

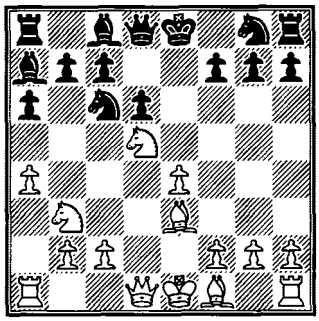
6...a6

Black provides the bishop a square of retreat. The debate as to which continuation is best at this stage continues to rage:

6...♕f6 7 ♕e2 a5 (7...a6 8 ♘c3 ♘ge7 9 a5 ♗a7 10 h4 h6 11 ♗e3 ♗xe3 12 ♕xe3 0-0 13 0-0-0 d6 14 f4 with roughly equal chances, Paragua-Kramer, Hawaii 1998) 8 ♘c3 ♘b4 (8...♘ge7 9 ♗e3 as usual in this line White is content to exchange Black's influential bishop, 9...♗xe3 10 ♕xe3 0-0 11 0-0-0 ♘b4 12 g4 ♘g6 13 g5 ♕f4 14 ♕xf4 ♘xf4 15 ♘b5 ♘e6 16 ♗c4 d6 17 c3 ♘a6 18 h4 gave White the initiative in Vega Gutierrez-Zawadzka, Heraklio 2004) 9 ♘d5 ♘xd5 10 exd5+ ♘e7 with equal chances, Jodorcovsky-Isaev, Mallorca 2004.

b) 6...a5 has a poor reputation because White can take advantage of the pawn being on a5 and not a6 by planting a piece on b5: 7 ♘c3 d6 8 ♘d5 ♗a7 9 ♗b5 ♗d7 10 0-0 ♘e5 (10...♘ge7 11 ♗g5 ♕c8 12 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 13 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 14 ♘xa5 is good for White; 10...♘ce7 is met by 11 ♕g4! ♘g6 12 ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 13 ♘xc7+! wins) 11 ♗d2! ♘f6 (11...c6 12 ♗xa5 b6 13 ♗c3 f6 [13...cxb5?! 14 f4 ♘g6 15 ♗xg7 h6 16 f5 ♖h7 17 fxg6 ♖xg7 18 gxf7+ ♖xf7 19 ♕h5 ♗e6 20 ♘d4 with a big advantage] 14 ♗xe5! fxe5 (14...dxe5?! 15 ♗c4 cxd5 16 ♕xd5 ♘h6 17 ♖fd1 with sufficient compensation for the piece) 15 f4! cxd5 [15...exf4 16 ♖xf4 or 15...cxb5 16 fxe5 bxa4 17 ♕f3 with a crushing attack] 16 fxe5 dxe4 17 ♕d5 ♘h6 18 exd6 wins) 12 ♗xa5 ♘xd5 13 exd5 ♗xb5 14 axb5 0-0 (14...♕d7 runs into 15 b6! with a clear advantage) 15 ♗c3 ♕g5?? (15...♕d7? 16 ♖xa7! ♖xa7 17 f4 winning because 17...♘g6 allows 18 ♕d4 threatening mate and the rook on a7; 15...♕h4 16 ♗d4! ♗xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♘xd4 leaves White a pawn up in the ending) 16 ♖xa7! ♖xa7 17 f4 ♕h6 18 ♕d4! ♘g4 19 h3 ♖aa8 20 hxg4 ♖fe8 21 ♘d2 ♖e2 22 ♘e4 1-0 Van der Wiel-Gulko, Amsterdam 1987.

7 ♘c3 d6 8 ♘d5 ♗a7 9 ♗e3



White is wary of the influence of Black's dark-squared bishop so proceeds to exchange it.

9...♗xe3

In the heavyweight encounter Rublevsky-Svidler, Dortmund 2004, Black allowed a capture on a7 and loss of queenside castling rights by playing 9...♘f6. That game continued 10 ♗xa7 ♖xa7 11 ♗d3 0-0 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♗e6 14 c4 a5 15 ♖c1 ♗d7 16 ♗b1 ♖a8 17 ♖c3 with equal chances.

10 ♘xe3 ♘f6 11 ♗d3

White prepares to castle kingside. Of course castling queenside is not

attractive in this particular case due to the early advance of the a-pawn.

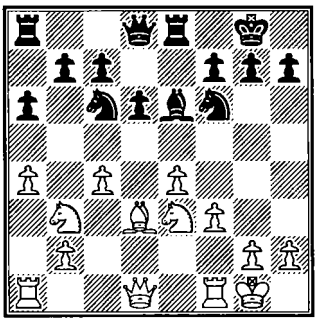
11...0-0 12 0-0 ♖e8

Black can also try 12...♘e5 when White can pursue the slim prospects of extracting an advantage from a sound base:

a) 13 c4 ♘fg4 14 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 15 ♗e2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 ♘c6 17 ♕d2 with equal chances, Van der Wiel-Stefanova, Wijk aan Zee 2002.

b) 13 f4 ♘fg4 14 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 15 ♕d2 ♘xd3 16 cxd3 c5 17 f5 (or 17 a5 ♗e6 18 ♕c3 f5 19 e5 ♖c8 20 ♖fe1 when the game is level, Van der Wiel-Van der Sterren, Dutch Championship 1996) 17...f6 18 a5 ♗h5 19 ♕c3 ♖c8 20 ♖ac1 ♖e8 21 ♖fe1 ♗f7 22 ♘d2 d5 23 b4 led to equal chances in Rublevsky-Naiditsch, Dortmund 2004.

13 f3 ♗e6 14 c4



Van der Wiel is relying on his space advantage to frustrate his opponent. I think Black should be fine with accurate play but the defensive task is awkward.

14...♘d7

Black decides to bring his knight back into the game via the c5 square. Also possible is 14...a5 15 ♖f2 ♘d7 (or 15...♕b8 16 ♖c1 ♕a7 17 ♘d5 ♗xd5 18 cxd5 ♘b4 19 ♗b5 ♖ec8 20 ♕d4 with an edge, Van der Wiel-Winants, Antwerp 1993) 16 f4 f6 (16...♘c5 17 f5 ♗d7 18 ♘xc5 dxc5 19 f6 with the initiative) 17 ♖d2 ♕b8! (a smart idea to shift the queen to the g1-a7 diagonal while 17...♘b4 18 ♗b1 ♕e7 19 ♘d4 ♘c5 20 ♖a3 ♗d7 21 ♘ef5 ♕f8 [21...♕f7 allows 22 ♖g3! winning] 22 ♖g3 g6 23 ♕h5 with some attacking chances, Van der Wiel-Gomez Esteban, Linares 1995) 18 ♔h1 ♕a7 19 ♘d5 offers equal chances, Rublevsky-Naiditsch, Dortmund 2004.

15 ♖f2

Van der Wiel is happy to use his space advantage to continuously improve his pieces. This is a sound policy because Black is relatively cramped. In a previous game Van der Wiel-Bellin, Amsterdam 1996, was played 15 f4 with the simple threat of trapping the bishop. That game went 15...f6 16 ♖a3 ♕b8 17 ♘d5 ♕a7+ 18 ♔h1 ♖ac8 19 ♗b1 ♘f8 20 ♕d3 ♘d8 21 ♘d4 c6 22 ♘e3 ♘f7 23 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 24 ♘f5 when White has attacking chances.

15...♘c5 16 ♗f1 a5 17 ♖a3

The rook looks a bit odd here but the idea is to free the queen from defending it and introduce the idea of ♘xc5 followed by ♖d3.

17...♘xb3 18 ♖xb3 ♘b4 19 ♖c3 ♘a6 20 ♗d3 ♘c5 21 ♗c2

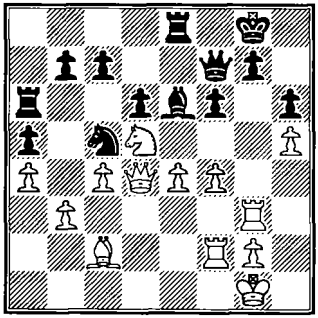
White is still busy manoeuvring

so as to maintain the tension. Nevertheless chances remain even.

21...♖a6 22 ♕d4 ♖b6 23 b3 f6 24 h4

White is just testing his opponent with this pawn advance and hopes for a compromising reply such as ...h7-h6.

24...♕e7 25 f4 ♖a6 26 h5 h6 27 ♘d5 ♕f7 28 ♖g3



The threat is ♘xf6+.

28...♔h8?!

Maybe 28...♗xd5 is the best chance although 29 exd5 does at least release the light-squared bishop to cause some damage.

29 e5! f5

The difference now is that 29...♗xd5 is met by 30 ♗g6 winning.

30 exd6 cxd6 31 ♖g6 ♗xd5

Of course 31...♔h7 does little to blunt the onslaught due to the reply 32 ♖f3 intending ♖fg3 doubling rooks.

32 cxd5 ♖e1+ 33 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 34 ♔xf1 ♖a8?

Whoops, 34...♔g8 is the best choice although White still has all the chances after 35 ♕c3 threatening ♗xf5.

35 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 36 ♖xd6 ♖e8 37 h6 ♘e4 38 ♖e6 gxh6 39 ♗xe4 fxe4 40 ♕xe4 1-0

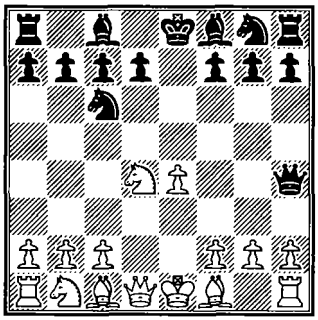
Conclusion

5 ♘b3 is a reliable line providing real opportunities for attack. If Black responds accurately then the opening will be roughly level and the battle will take place in the middlegame. In the game **Baklan – Billot** Black tries 5...♗b4+ which is considered fairly unusual. Of course this would be a more typical response at club level in order to avoid theory so I discuss a couple of alternatives with 6 ♗d2 looking the most straightforward attempt to secure the advantage. **Palac – Vucic** sees one of the main lines with 5...♗b6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 to which White responds with the interesting plan of 7 ♕e2 to help speed up queenside castling in preparation for a kingside attack. This works out well and the initiative leads to some promising tactics. In the next game **Palac – Kostic**, White once again uses his plan of quickly castling queenside against the 6...♕f6 system. In this case, the kingside pawn storm works well, providing a model example of play. On 6...♘ge7 the top level encounter **Rublevsky – Anand** sees White

staying with the theme of queenside castling and launching a kingside attack. Black plays well and his ploy of advancing the a-pawn with ...a7-a5 provides enough counterplay and the game drifts towards a draw. **Zhang Pengxiang – Moradiabadi** considers another line with ...d7-d6 whereupon White reacts with a2-a4 to squeeze the dark-squared bishop. It is worth looking out for 9 ♕f3 which is a modern twist to an old line. In the following game the big difference is 9 ♗e3 which has been one of White's pet lines for years. The space advantage makes it easier to activate the pieces and the main struggle commences in the middlegame.

The Steinitz Variation: 4...♕h4

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4



History

This aggressive reply, attacking the e-pawn, is named in honour of Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900) who regularly played it. I have found games by the great English player Howard Staunton (1810-74) who employed it in 1840 but Steinitz was the first official world champion (1886-94) so his seal of approval did most to encourage others to follow his example. The line has fluctuated in popularity because bringing the queen out so early can be a risky business and indeed prompted the renowned Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch (1862-1934) to write: "The defence 4....♕h4 – at one time frequently played, particularly by Steinitz – is, in my opinion, not even worthy of consideration, for it cannot possibly be the right strategy to bring the queen out this early in the game, without the necessity or clear advantage of the move. White offers his e-pawn by 5 ♘b5 or 5 ♘f3 and obtains a violent attack." It is not surprising after such a condemnation that the line fell out of favour amongst the stronger players of the era. However, after the explosion of interest in the 1990s it found numerous adherents including the maverick grandmaster Jonny Hector who gave it weight. Its crediblity rating was further increased when Lev Gutman wrote an entire book on the variation incorporating many of his own original ideas to revive some of the obscure variations. This attracted even more players to the line which was then subjected to intense scrutiny at the highest level. In this chapter I will comment on Gutman's ideas particularly in those cases where he does *not* give certain moves – this will give White players the chance to combat the opponent on unknown territory.

The Basic Plan for White

White has to accept he will lose a pawn in the main line but that he will also have sufficient compensation in the form of faster development. The fact that Black gives up castling rights by volunteering to move the king will confer upon White a long-term advantage because it upsets the co-ordination of the black pieces.

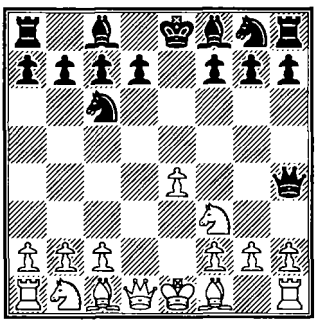
The Basic Plan for Black

Black wants to win the e-pawn as if White decides to defend it then he will enjoy a strong initiative. In the main line Black grabs the pawn and hopes that the material advantage will be enough to win if the white attack is repelled.

The best way to understand the potential dangers for White is to see how Black can achieve a decent position from the opening against the less critical continuations:

Fernandez Egea – Mitkov
Sitges 1998

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘f3



This is one of Dr. Tarrasch's recommendations and is designed to chase around the black queen with gain of time and then to exploit White's superior development. It makes sense to see how a modern grandmaster copes with the set-up.

Other rare alternatives are:

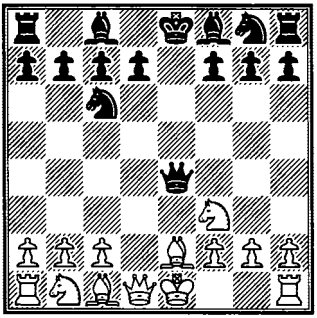
a) 5 ♗e3?! is called the Braune variation but it is not very good: 5..♕xe4 6 ♘d2 ♕e7 7 ♘2f3 ♘xd4 8 ♕xd4 ♕b4+ 9 c3 ♕xd4 10 ♘xd4 c6 with the superior ending thanks to the extra pawn, Punnett-Lane, Hereford 1987.

b) 5 ♘f5?! is known as the Paulsen Variation. 5...♕xe4+ 6 ♘e3 ♘f6 7 ♗d3 ♕e6!? (This is my new idea which I always intended to play but never had the opportunity. Although 7...♕e5 is the traditional move, placing the queen on e6 looks like an improvement because White cannot really exploit the potential pin on the e-file) 8 0-0 ♗c5 9 ♖e1 0-0 10 ♘f5 ♘e5! is better for Black.

c) 5 ♘xc6 ♕xe4+ 6 ♗e2 (it seems strange to me that White would volunteer to enter an ending a pawn down by 6 ♕e2 but this has happened plenty of times: 6...♕xe2+ 7 ♗xe2 dxc6 8 0-0 ♗f5 with the advantage, Wislez - Van Hul, Antwerp 1995) 6...dxc6 7 0-0 ♗e6 8 ♘d2 ♕d4 (8...♕g6 is also worth considering when 9 ♘f3 ♗d6 is better for Black) 9 c4 0-0-0 10 ♕a4 ♔b8 11 ♘f3 ♕b6 12 a3 c5 with the brighter prospects, Mitrofanov-Leshchenko, Kiev 2002.

5 ♗e2, 5 ♕d3 and 5 ♘b5 are discussed in the next main game.

5...♕xe4+ 6 ♗e2



6...♕e7!

An excellent idea. Black retreats the queen in order to tuck it out of harm's way on d8. This idea attributed to Evans has really pushed White's opening idea of 5 ♘f3 into decline because Black can safely hang on to his material advantage without fearing an attack.

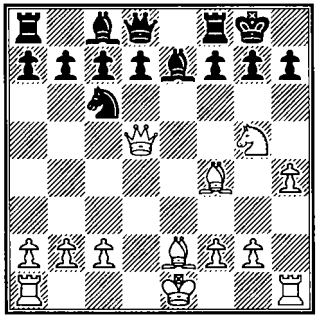
7 ♘c3 ♕d8

It is also possible for Black to develop with 7...♘f6 when Evans, in his original analysis, gave the line 8 ♗g5 ♕d8 9 ♘d5 ♗e7 and claimed that Black has the better chances. However Mitkov's move-order is a likely improvement because if White wants to transpose to that line with 8 ♗g5 it can now be met by 8...♗e7.

8 ♗f4 ♘f6 9 ♘d5

White is striving to make an impression by offering to exchange the defensive black king's knight but it is rather a lightweight policy. Maybe 9 0-0 is the best bet with the hope of restricting Black's pieces although I think White will still struggle to prove it is worth a pawn.

9...♘xd5 10 ♕xd5 ♗e7 11 ♘g5 0-0 12 h4?!



Well, White has to be congratulated for going for the attack but this is not the right way to do it because he needs more active reinforcements to succeed. 12 0-0 is the safe choice although Black is better.

12...♘b4 13 ♕b3 d5

Mitkov cuts out any potential threat to the f7 pawn and prepares to develop his queen's bishop.

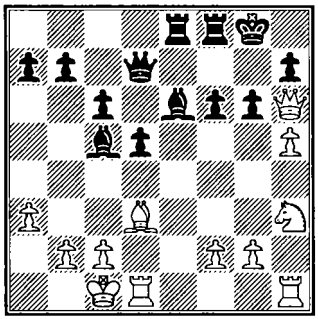
14 a3 ♘a6 15 0-0-0 c6 16 ♕f3

White transfers the queen to the kingside but it is a slow process to force Black to make a concession. A better choice was 16 ♗xa6 when 16...bxa6 17 ♕d3 g6 18 ♖he1 gives White some play although Black should still emerge on top.

16...♘c5 17 ♗e3 f6 18 ♘h3 ♗e6 19 ♗xc5?!

The idea is to be able to put a bishop on d3 without fear of it being exchanged. The problem is that this exchange merely increases the effectiveness of Black's dark-squared bishop.

19...♗xc5 20 ♗d3 ♕d7 21 ♕h5 g6 22 ♕h6 ♖ae8 23 h5



23...g5!

Mitkov cheekily entombs the white queen, snuffing out its effectiveness and with the plan of ...♖f7 and ...♗f8 in view.

24 f4 g4 25 ♖de1

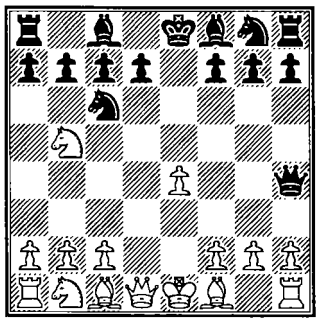
Tantamount to resignation which is hardly surprising considering that the obvious 25 ♘g1 is well met by 25...♖f7 when the threat to snare the white queen with ...♗f8 spells only doom and gloom.

25...gxh3 26 ♖xe6 hxg2 27 ♖g1 ♖xe6 0-1

I started playing 4...♕h4 at the age of 12 when I realised that the loss of a pawn would give my opponents at the local chess club a big shock. At the time I was inspired by a small booklet written by Tony Swift and Len Pickett which seemed to contain a number of valuable insights. The variation brought me success for years until I abandoned it because of the recommended line played in the next main game:

Schuermans – Lane
Le Touquet 1991

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘b5



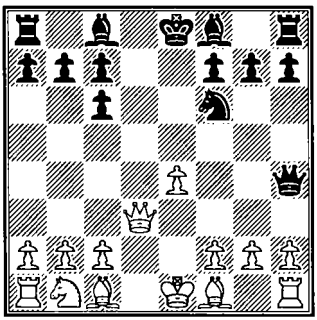
This is a chance to see another of Tarrasch's recommendations in action. The idea is to attack the c7 pawn and surrender the e4 pawn in return for rapid development. It is known as the Horwitz variation after the German Bernhard Horwitz (1808-85) who became a chess professional while living in England.

Also possible:

a) 5 ♗e2 ♗c5! This has proved to be the best move to press home the advantage) 6 ♗e3 (6 c3 ♕xe4 7

♘xc6 ♕xg2 0-1 Neubauer-Hresc, St Veit 1995) 6...♗xd4 7 ♗xd4 ♕xe4 8 ♗e3 (8 ♗xg7 ♕xg2 9 ♗xh8 ♕xh1+ 10 ♗f1 d6 favours Black) 8...♕xg2 9 ♗f3 ♕h3 10 ♘c3 ♘ge7 11 ♘b5 ♔d8 is better for Black because he is rewarded with two pawns in return for loss of castling rights.

b) 5 ♕d3?! ♘f6 6 ♘xc6 (6 ♘d2 ♘g4! 7 g3 ♕f6 8 f3 [8 ♘4f3 ♘b4! destroys White because 9 ♕b3 walks into 9...♕b6 and Black wins] 8...♘b4 9 ♕c3 ♕xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♘xc2+ 11 ♔d1 ♘xd4 12 fxg4 d5 led to a clear advantage in Aldama-Lugo, Matanzas 1992) 6...dxc6 and now:



b1) 7 e5 ♘g4 8 g3 ♕h5 9 f4 ♗c5 is strong.

b2) 7 ♘d2 ♗c5 8 g3 ♕h5 9 ♗g2?! (a natural move but played under difficult circumstances; 9 ♘b3 is well met by 9...♗g4 intending ...♖d8 if the bishop is captured) 9...♘g4! 10 ♗f3 ♗xf2+ 11 ♔e2 ♕c5 (Black is much better but White's desperation soon results in a quick loss) 12 ♘b3 ♕b6 13 ♖f1 ♗c5 14 ♗f4 ♗e7 15 h3 ♘h2 16 ♗e3 c5 17 ♕c3? ♘xf1 18 ♕xg7 ♗f6 0-1 Roy Chowdhury-Mitra, Calcutta 1993.

b3) 7 ♘c3 ♗b4 8 ♗d2 ♗xc3 9 ♗xc3 ♘xe4 10 ♕e3!? (or 10 ♗xg7 ♕xf2+ 11 ♔d1 ♗g4+ wins) 10...♗f5 11 ♗xg7 ♖g8 12 0-0-0 ♕xf2 13 ♗d4 ♕xe3+ 14 ♗xe3 ♘d6 15 g3 a6 (15...0-0-0 is also possible because if 16 ♗xa7 then 16...b6 traps the bishop and 17 ♗a6+ ♔d7 leaves Black clearly on top) 16 ♗f4 0-0-0 17 ♗e2 is assessed as no worse for White by Gutman but I would be surprised to see many people happy to be a pawn down with White so I favour Black.

5...♗c5!?

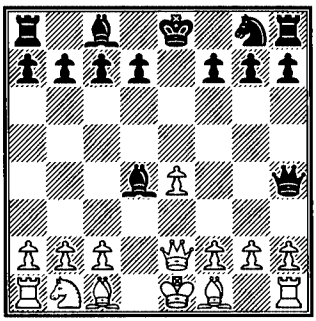
I think this is the best way to play the line because taking immediately on e4 has a poor practical record. For example: 5...♕xe4+ 6 ♗e2 and now 6...♔d8 (6...♗d6 loses to 7 ♕xd6!; 6...♕e5?? [I found numerous games where this is still being played] 7 f4 ♕c5 8 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 9 ♘xa8 with a winning advantage, Horwitz-Staunton, London 1846) 7 0-0 a6 8 ♘5c3 ♕d4 9 ♗d3 d6 10 ♗e3 ♕h4 11 ♘e4 (intending ♗g5+) 11...h6 12 ♘bd2 ♘e5 13 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♕xf3 ♗e6 15 ♘c3 gives White a dangerous initiative according to Gutman, presumably because Black's poor development makes the defence awkward.

6 ♕e2

6 ♘xc7+? is a mistake owing to 6...♔d8 leaving White in double trouble at c7 and f2 when 7 ♗g5+ ♕xg5 8 ♘xa8 ♘f6 favours Black who will later round up the white

knight with ...b6 and ...♗b7. If 6 ♕f3 then 6...♘d4 is the easiest way to equalise: 7 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 8 c3 (or 8 ♘c3 ♘f6 9 ♗f4 d6 10 ♘b5 ♗b6 11 ♗d3 ♘h5 12 ♗g3 ♘xg3 13 ♕xg3 ♕xg3 [13...♕f6 14 ♘c3 ♗a5 maintains the pressure] 14 hxg3 ♗d7 led to roughly equal chances in Bachmann-Marra, Sao Paulo 2004) 8...♗b6 9 ♘d2 d6 10 h3 a6 11 ♘c4 ♗a7 12 ♗e3 ♗xe3 13 ♕xe3 ♘f6 14 ♗d3 0-0 15 0-0 ♗e6 16 ♘d2 ♖ae8 17 f4 ♘d7 18 ♕d4? ♗xh3! 19 ♖ae1 (19 gxh3 ♕g3+ 20 ♔h1 ♕xh3+ 21 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 22 ♔h1 ♖e6 leads to mate) 19...♗g4 with the advantage, Sibarevic-Chiburdanidze, Banja Luka 1985.

6...♘d4 7 ♘xd4 ♗xd4



8 c3

White pushes the bishop back so he will be able to develop his queen's bishop which is currently tied down to protection of the b2 pawn. 8 ♘d2 planning 9 ♘f3 to fork the bishop and queen is worthy of consideration. Golod-Zhidkov, Budapest 1994, continued 8...♕e7 9 c3 ♗c5 10 g3 (10 e5 is met by 10...d5 with a level position) 10...a5 11 ♗g2 d6 12 ♘b3 ♗b6 13 0-0 ♘f6 14 ♗e3 a4 15 ♘c1 ♗xe3 16 ♕xe3 0-0 with approximately equal chances.

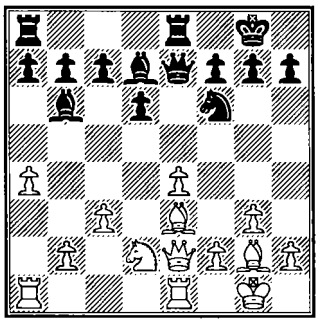
8...♗b6 9 g3 ♕e7 10 ♗g2 d6

I just want to get my pieces developed so before bringing out the king's knight I make sure that e4-e5 is ruled out.

11 ♗e3 ♘f6 12 ♘d2 0-0 13 0-0 ♖e8

I reinforce the pressure on the e4 pawn so as to make things a little more awkward for White who has to keep guard.

14 ♖fe1 ♗d7 15 a4



Schuermans wants me to exchange on e3 so he plans a4-a5. Instead 15 ♗xb6 axb6 is fine for Black because the queen's rook can operate on the semi-open a-file.

15...♘g4!? 16 ♘c4

Perhaps White should just exchange bishops with 16 ♗xb6 to avoid the knight capture on e3. Then 16...axb6 17 b3 is about equal.

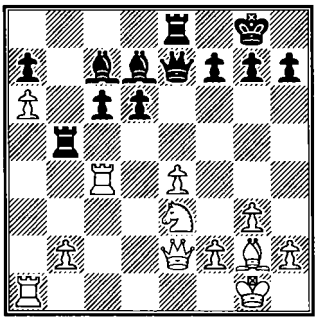
16...♘xe3 17 ♘xe3 c6!

The bishop now has the option of retreating to c7 in response to White's a4-a5, while additionally the pawn on c6 keeps out the knight from the influential d5 square.

18 a5 ♗c7 19 a6?!

I suspect that White did not have to restrict his queen's rook to the defence of the a-pawn but on a6 it has the disadvantage of leaving White over-extended.

19...b5 20 c4 ♖ab8 21 ♖ec1 bxc4 22 ♖xc4 ♖b5!



I have to admit that the primary concern is to double rooks on the b-file but I also chose the b5 square in anticipation of my opponent trying to be clever!

23 ♘d5?? ♖xd5! 0-1

I think the best way for White to continue is 5 ♘c3 and after the standard 5...♗b4 insert the crafty 6 ♗e2 which really makes Black work hard to fend off the tactics:

Karjakin – Malinin
Sudak 2002

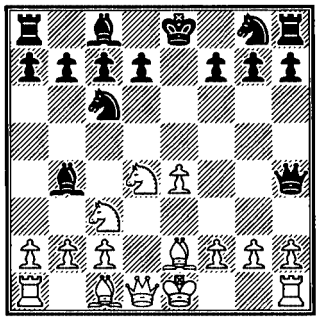
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘c3

This is known as the Modern Variation.

5...♗b4

The standard reply to pin the knight and once again threaten the e-pawn. This is necessary otherwise the black queen will soon become a target and have to retreat. For instance: 4...♘f6? 5 ♘f5 ♕g4 (5...♕h5? runs into 6 ♗e2 ♕g6 7 ♘h4 and the black queen is trapped) 6 ♕xg4 ♘xg6 7 ♘d5 ♔d8 (7...♘b4 is met by 8 ♘xg7+ ♗xg7 9 ♘xb4 wins a pawn.

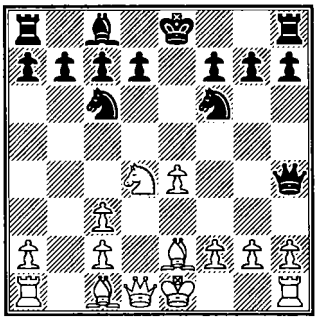
6 ♗e2!



I can highly recommend this move because from personal experience playing Black it is the most awkward choice. White invites Black to take the pawn on e4 and in return will enjoy quick development and tactical chances. 6 ♘db5 is currently out of favour due to 6...♗a5 when the game is balanced.

6...♘f6

The main line is 6...♕xe4 which is examined later in the chapter. However, the problem of what to do when Black doesn't follow the standard book line is always annoying so I have tried to cater for such a situation. In this case Black, having charged out his queen to win a pawn, now tries to carry on as though it is a standard position, which is a flawed policy. 6...♘ge7 is looked at in the next main game. 6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♘f6 (7...♕xe4 8 ♘b5 ♔d8 transposes to the main line discussed later in the chapter)



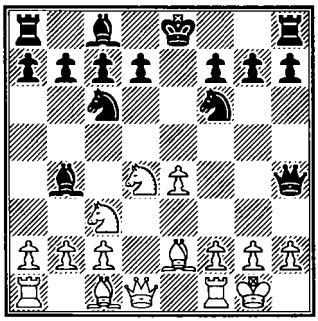
And now:

a) 8 ♘b5 is no longer potentially lethal due to 8...0-0! with roughly equal chances.

b) 8 ♘f5 ♕xe4 9 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 10 ♗g5 ♕g6 11 ♕d2 ♕xg7 12 ♕f4 ♔e7 13 ♕e3+ ♔d8 14 ♕f4 is a fancy-looking draw by repetition.

c) 8 ♗f3 is the best of the bunch: 8...♘xe4 9 0-0 ♘g5 10 ♖e1+ ♘e6 11 ♗a3 (White might be a pawn down but Black has tough decisions to make on how to get his pieces into play) 11...♕f6 (11...♕g5 12 ♖b1 ♕a5 13 ♕c1 h6 14 ♖b5 ♕a6 15 ♗e2 ♕a4 16 ♘f5 ♔d8 17 ♖d5 a6 18 ♗d3 and White has the better chances due to his opponent's dormant pieces, Gutman-Leisebein, Corr 1999) 12 ♗d5 ♘e7 13 ♘b5 ♔d8 (as usual in this variation Black moves his king, leaving him with the long-term worry of how to co-ordinate his pieces) 14 c4 with better practical chances for White, Free-Koteski, Internet 2002.

7 0-0

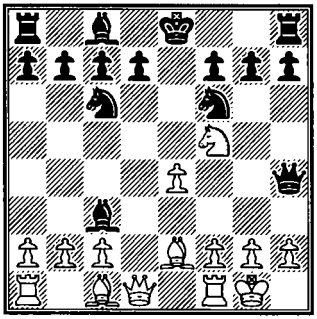


7...♗xc3

Instead 7...♘xe4 is regarded as risky upon 8 ♘f5 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♕f6 10 cxb4 ♕xa1 (Black wins the exchange but his pieces are in disarray which allows White a tremendous attack; 10...♕xf5 11 ♗d3 intending ♖e1+ also gives White the initiative) 11 b5! ♘d8 12 ♗a3 ♕f6 (12...♕xd1?? allows 13 ♘xg7 mate) 13 ♘e7 c6 (or 13...♘e6 14 ♘d5 ♕h4 15 ♗g4 intending to exchange on e6 followed by ♘xc7+) 14 ♖e1 ♘e6 15 ♗f3 d5 (15...a5 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♘xc6 ♖a6 18 ♘e5 ♖a7 19 ♕d6 is very good for White) 16 bxc6 bxc6 and now instead of 17 ♕d3 as

played in Fercec-Sermek, Pula 1997, White should play 17 ♘xd5! which is decisive in view of 17...cxd5 18 ♗xd5 ♖b8 19 ♗c6+ ♗d7 20 ♕xd7 mate.

8 ♘f5!



A nice idea to gain time by attacking the queen and introducing more tactics.

8...♕xe4 9 ♗d3 ♕g4

Black wants to exchange queens to avoid the potential attack. 9...♕a4 is also possible but White has the initiative after 10 ♘xg7+ (10 bxc3 0-0 11 ♗g5 ♘e4 12 ♕g4 ♘c5 13 ♕g3 also looks reasonable for White) 10...♔f8 11 ♗h6 ♗e5 (or 11...♘g8 12 ♘e6+ ♔e7 13 ♗f8+ ♔xe6 14 bxc3 ♘f6 15 ♕e2+ ♘e5 16 f4 and Black is busted) 12 ♘f5+ ♔e8 13 ♖e1 d6 14 f4 ♗xf5 15 ♗xf5 ♘g8 16 ♕h5 which gives White decent play.

10 f3 ♕a4

Instead 10...♗d4+ is exposed as a poor choice upon 11 ♔h1 ♕g6 (11...♕h5 12 ♘xg7+ wins) 12 ♘xd4 ♕h5 13 ♖e1+ ♔d8 14 ♘f5 with a very good position.

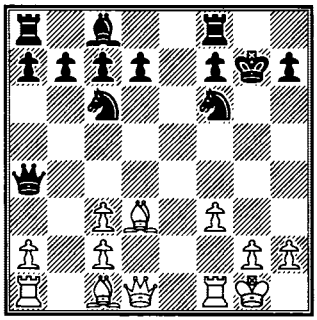
11 bxc3 0-0

A logical move to safeguard the g7 pawn. Instead 11...♔f8 has been tested but 12 ♕e1 to instigate an attack is strong. For example: 12...d6 13 ♘xg7! ♔xg7 14 ♕g3+ ♔f8 15 ♗h6+ ♔e7 16 ♗g7 ♖g8 (16...♗e6 17 ♕g5 ♖he8 18 ♕xf6+ ♔d7 19 ♗xh7 gives White an edge) 17 ♗xf6+ ♔f8 18 ♕f2 ♗h3 (18...♕f4!? is a better choice when 19 ♗h4 ♔g7 20 ♖fe1 offers White a slight plus due to his safer king) 19 ♕e3 ♖xg2+ 20 ♔h1 intending ♕h6+ is good for White.

12 ♘xg7!!

A splendid idea to rip apart Black's defensive shell in pursuit of glory.

12...♔xg7



13 ♗h6+!

The brilliant combination continues with another piece thrown into the onslaught. There is always a suspicion that now no one else will fall for this line but in fact this top class grandmaster was unaware that the same line had already been played at least twice

before. Therefore, with no mention in reference books such as *Nunn's Chess Openings* or *Modern Chess Openings*, I think there are plenty of people who could fall for the same trap.

13...♔xh6

The alternatives also lead to despair for Black:

a) 13...♔g8 14 ♕d2 (heading for the g5-square) 14...♕h4 (14...♕a5 is no better owing to 15 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 16 ♕h6+ ♔g8 17 ♖fe1! ♕c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♕f8 19 ♕xf6 with a winning advantage) 15 ♗g5 ♕h5 16 ♗xf6 ♖e8 17 g4 ♕c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♖e6 19 ♕h6 ♖xf6 20 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 21 ♕xf6+ ♔xh7 22 ♕xf7+ 1-0 Fercec-Rupeni, Milan 1994.

b) 13...♔h8 is an admission of defeat but it is worth seeing how the first game in this line continued: 14 ♗xf8 d6 15 ♕d2 ♕h4 16 ♗h6 ♘g8 17 ♗g5 ♕a4 (17...♕h5 18 g4 ♕h3 19 ♖f2 preparing ♗f1 seals Black's fate) 18 c4 ♕a5 19 ♕f4 ♘e5 20 ♗f6+ ♘xf6 21 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 22 ♕g5+ 1-0 Vukovic-Mozetic, Banja Vrucica 1991.

14 ♕d2+ ♔h5

The black king is obliged to stroll up the board, allowing White to contemplate winning the brilliancy prize. If the king retreats then White's task is even easier. Meanwhile 14...♔g7 leads to ruin after 15 ♕g5+ ♔h8 16 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 17 ♕g5+ ♔h8 18 ♕h6 with mate to follow.

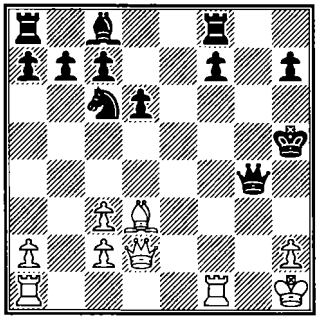
15 g4+ ♘xg4

Or 15...♔h4 16 ♕h6+ ♘h5 17 ♕xh5 mate.

16 fxg4+ ♕xg4+

16...♔xg4 is no better due to 17 ♗e2+ ♔h3 18 ♕e3+ ♔h4 19 ♕g3 mate.

17 ♔h1 d6



An attempt to hang on with 17...♕g5 is refuted by 18 ♖f5.

18 ♖f6

The threat of mate on h6 is a monster problem for Black. White's chosen move is even more crushing than 18 ♗e2.

18...♕g5 19 ♗e2+ ♗g4

If 19...♔h4 then 20 ♖h6+ ♕xh6 21 ♕xh6 mate.

20 ♗xg4+ 1-0

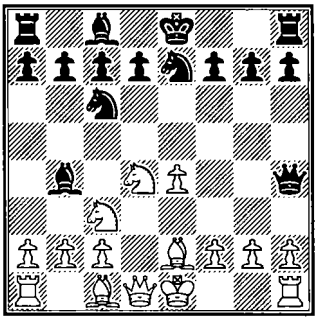
Black gave up in view of 20...♔xg4 21 ♖g1+ or 20...♕xg4 21 ♖h6 mate.

If Black wishes to avoid the main line of this variation then his other major choice is 9...♘ge7. Though

this has a patchy practical record in the following example an established grandmaster hopes to improvise:

Reinaldo Castineira – Golod
Linares 2001

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗e2 ♘ge7!?



7 0-0

I think when faced with something relatively unusual at this stage it is a good idea to castle so that White is ready to initiate tactics with his king safely tucked away. 7 ♘db5 is met by 7...♗a5.

7...0-0

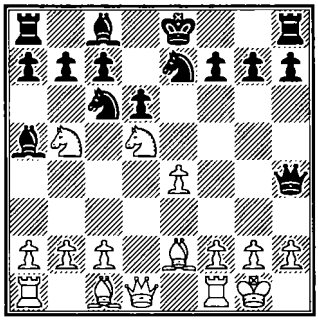
An obvious idea to whisk the king to safety but I could not trace any other game in this line.

Also possible are:

a) 7...a6?! 8 ♘f3 ♕f6 9 ♗g5 ♕d6 10 ♘d5 (this helps to confine the queen to d6 where it merely blocks in his queenside pieces) 10...f6 11 ♗e3 ♘xd5 12 exd5 ♘e7 13 c4 with the plan of a2-a3 and queenside expansion which gives White the advantage, Turzo-Jonas, Zalakaros 1996.

b) 7...♗a5 8 ♘f3 ♕f6 9 ♘d5! ♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘e7 (10...♘e5 11 ♘xe5! ♕xe5 12 c3 0-0 13 ♖e1 d6 14 ♗d3 ♕f6 15 ♕h5 g6 16 ♕h6 is good for White) 11 c4 0-0 (11...d6?? is a serious error as 12 ♕a4+ wins) 12 ♗g5 ♕d6 13 a3 intending b2-b4 with the advantage.

c) 7...d6 8 ♘db5 ♗a5 9 ♘d5

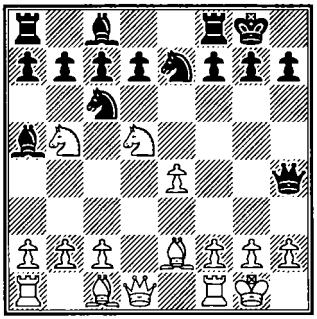


This idea is an echo of the main game: 9...♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘e5 11 ♗d2! ♗b6 12 ♗e3 ♕d8 (12...♔d8 to defend the c7 pawn is possible but in this variation it can be a long-term liability to leave the king in the centre of the board and 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 ♕d2 gives White an edge) 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 ♕d2, preparing ♕c3 to target the c7 pawn, gives Black problems.

d) 7...♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♘xd4 (8...♕xe4 9 ♘b5 ♔d8 10 ♖e1 offers equal chances although the king on d8 is a potential worry) 9 cxd4! ♕xe4 10 ♖e1 ♕h4 11 ♗d3 d5

12 ♖b1 (White can also try 12 ♕e2!? when a sample line runs 12...♗e6 13 ♕e5 ♘c6 14 ♕xc7 0-0 15 c3 with the advantage thanks to the rampaging queen) 12...0-0 13 ♗a3 ♖e8 14 ♕f3 ♗e6 and now instead of 15 c3 as played in Neilsen-Hector, Festuge 1991, White should try 15 ♖xb7 which is better for him because 15...♕xd4 allows 16 ♖b4 ♕f6 17 ♕xf6 gxf6 18 ♖b7 with a superior ending.

8 ♘db5 ♗a5 9 ♘d5!



Black is a top class grandmaster but it is White who is already dictating play because of the favourable opening.

9...♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘e5 11 f4 ♗b6+

After 11...a6 White should try 12 fxe5 rather than the meek 12 ♘d4 which has been tried in the past. For instance: 12...axb5 13 ♗f4 and it is not clear how Black can activate his queenside because 13...b6? allows 14 a3 which will soon win a piece due to the therat of b2-b4.

12 ♔h1 ♘g6 13 f5 ♘e5 14 d6!

A reminder that it is a good idea to stifle the defence before embarking on a direct assault of the black king. White wants to block the queenside before continuing the attack. 14 f6 fails to make an impression after 14...d6! 15 ♖f4 ♕h6 16 ♖f3 ♕g6 when 17 ♖g3 would allow 17...♕xf6 and the attack has evaporated.

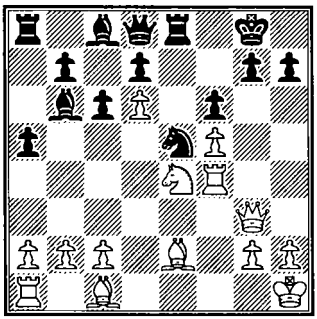
14...c6 15 ♖f4 ♕d8

Instead 15...♕h6 would be met by 16 ♘c3 ♕f6 (otherwise White would plonk a knight on e4 and the queen would be cornered) 17 ♘e4 ♕d8 18 f6 g6 19 c4 with a clear advantage.

16 ♘c3 ♖e8 17 ♘e4 a5

If 17...f6 then 18 c4 helps to cement Black's poor position on the queenside after 18...a6 19 c5 ♗a7 20 ♗e3 when White is clearly on top.

18 ♕e1 f6 19 ♕g3!



There are times when an attack is fairly straightforward because here the queen is already poised to threaten mate.

19...a4

It is an indication of how bad the game has gone for Golod that he is reduced to advancing his a-pawn just to be able to get his queen's rook into the action. On the alternative 19...♔h8 20 ♖h4! a4 21 ♕h3 h6 22 ♗xh6 ♔g8 23 ♗xg7 Black will be mated.

20 ♖h4 ♖a5 21 ♗h6 g6 22 fxg6 hxg6

22...♘xg6 does nothing to stem the attack in view of 23 ♗c4+ ♔h8 24 ♗f8! ♖xf8 (24...♘xf8 25 ♕g8 mate) 25 ♕xg6 and Black must resign.

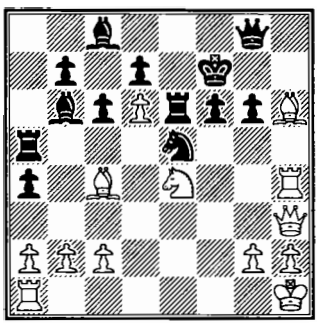
23 ♗c4+ ♖e6

There is no choice but to concede material as 23...♔h7 allows 24 ♗f8 mate.

24 ♗f4 ♔g7 25 ♕h3

There is no rush to take the rook on e6 when mate is likely.

25...♕g8 26 ♗h6+ ♔f7



27 ♘xf6!

The final breakthrough, bringing the game to an abrupt halt.

27...♘xc4

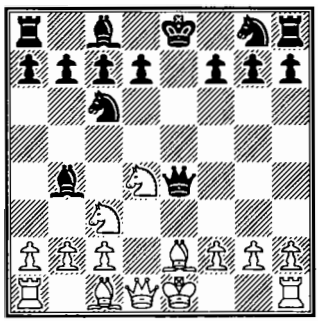
If the knight is taken 27...♔xf6 then 28 ♖f4 mate.

28 ♘xg8 ♖ae5 29 ♖f1+ 1-0

The next game sees a real test of White's set-up with Black taking the offered pawn and entering the main line. I have made an effort in the following games to add more analysis than usual so that when White sacrifices a piece it can be reproduced with confidence by looking at Black's alternatives:

Oral – Kantorik
Slovakian Team Championship
2001

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗e2 ♕xe4



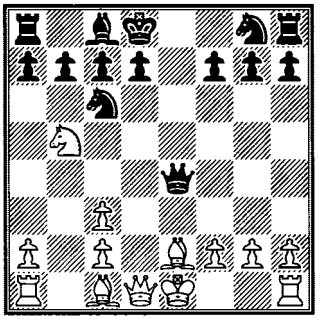
White is relying on rapid development and tactical chances to compensate for the pawn. In fact

now Black will soon be obliged to move the king and give up the right to castle.

7 ♘db5 ♗xc3+

7...♕xg2? 8 ♗f3 leaves Black in trouble at c7 and g2 and 8...♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 places him in such dire straits that he might even resign. If 7...♗a5? then 8 ♘xc7+ is decisive because after 8...♗xc7 comes 9 ♘xe4.

8 bxc3 ♔d8

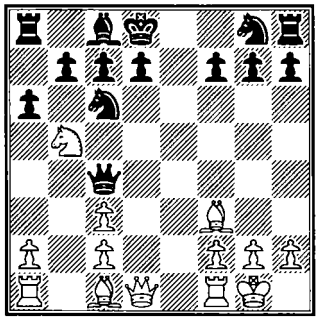


This is the critical position for the future of the line. Black is content to hang on to the extra pawn at the cost of having to give up the right to castle. White's point of view is that it is worth the material because in the long-term the practical difficulties of Black co-ordinating his rooks with a king on d8 are a real problem. Black is obliged to defend the c-pawn and forfeit castling rights. Instead 8...♕e5?? is knocked out by 9 f4.

9 0-0 a6

This used to be widely played but at international level the line stopped abruptly after this game. 9...d6 and 9...♘f6 are considered in the next two main games.

10 ♗f3 ♕c4



11 ♘d6!!

A wonderful move which plunges Black into despair. I reckon it will still catch people out because Gutman's renowned Batsford book was published in 2001 and crucially this move is not mentioned. Of course, this is testimony to Thomas Oral's diligent work on the line, having faced 4...♕h4 a few times prior to the game. The basic idea is to install the queen on d6 and since 9...a6 has been played the b6 square is now available for occupation by the dark-squared bishop.

11...cxd6 12 ♕xd6

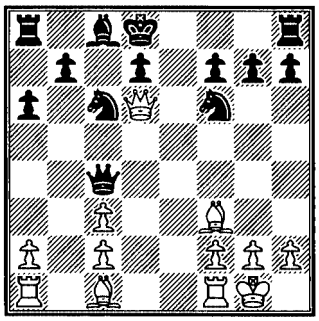
White has given up a piece so we need to make sure that it really works.

12...♘f6

It is worth checking out Black's defensive possibilities:

a) On 12...♘ge7, 13 ♗f4 looks strong: 13...♕a4 (13...♕xc3 14 ♕c7+ ♔e8 15 ♖fe1 ♕a5 16 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 17 ♗d6 ♔d8 18 ♗xe7+ ♔c7 19 ♖ad1 ♘c6 20 ♗d6+ ♔d8 21 c4 when Black's great difficulty in developing leaves White on top) 14 ♕c7+ ♔e8 15 ♖fe1 ♘d8 (15 ..♕a5 16 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 17 ♖e1+ ♔f8 18 ♕d6+ ♔g8 19 ♖e8 mate) 16 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 17 ♕d6+ ♔e8 18 ♗g5 f6 19 ♗h5+ g6 20 ♖e1+ leads to mate.

b) 12...♕e6 13 ♕f8+ ♕e8 14 ♕xg7 ♘ge7 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♗g5 d5! (the d-pawn advances to allow the queen's rook to defend the e7 knight) 17 ♖fe1 ♖a7 18 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♖e1 ♗e6 20 ♖xe6 fxe6 21 ♗xe7+ ♔c8 22 ♗d6 ♕d8 23 ♗e5 ♖g8 24 ♕a7 with a grip on the position.



13 ♗e3

Now the big threat is 14 ♗b6+ followed by ♖fe1+.

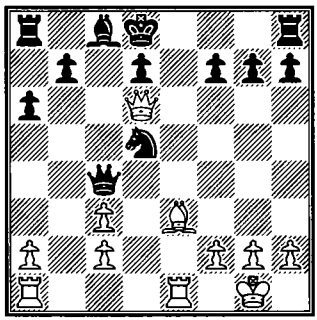
13...♘e7

If 13...♕b5, to cover the b6 square, then 14 ♖ab1 seals Black's fate after 14...♘e8 15 ♕a3! ♕c4 16 ♗b6+ ♘c7 17 ♖fe1 (threatening ♗xc6 followed by ♕e7 mate) 17...♖e8 18 ♗xc7+ ♔xc7 19 ♖xe8 winning.

14 ♖fe1 ♘fd5

Or 14...♘fg8 15 ♗b6+ ♔e8 16 ♖e4 ♕xc3 17 ♖ae1 (preparing ♖xe7+) 17...♕f6 18 ♕c7 and Black can give up.

15 ♗xd5 ♘xd5



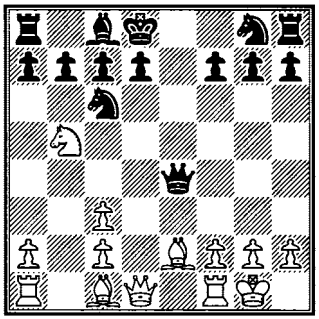
16 ♕xd5! 1-0

Black resigned beause of 16...♕xd5 17 ♗b6 mate or 16...♕c6 17 ♕xc6 dxc6 18 ♗b6+ ♔d7 19 ♖ad1 mate.

The next couple of games feature the Dutch International Master Leon Pliester who is one of the strongest players who has kept faith with 4...♕h4 in recent years. However after the following losses I have not been able to trace any more games where he has played the line!

Smeets – Pliester
Dutch Team Championship 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗e2 ♕xe4 7 ♘db5 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♔d8 9 0-0

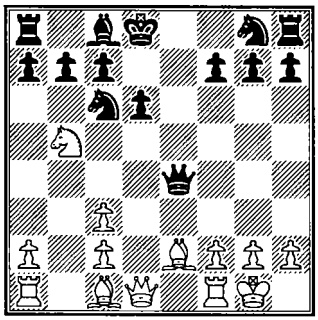


9...d6

A quick look at the previous main game will indicate that sacrificing a knight on d6 is a theme in this line. Therefore it is rather generous for Black to allow it to happen when White can also pick up a couple of pawns in the process. 9...♘ge7 10 ♗d3 ♕h4 (10...♕d5 11 ♖e1 f6 (11...d6 is well met by 12 c4! when 12...♕c5 13 ♗e3 ♕e5 14 c5 d5 15 ♕d2 intending ♗f4 is good news for White) 12 ♗f4 ♘e5 13 c4 ♕e6 14 ♗g3 with the idea of f2-f4) 14...♕b6 15 ♗xe5 fxe5 16 ♖xe5 regaining the pawn with the bonus that the black king still looks vulnerable in the middle of the board) and now:

a) 11 g3 is rarely played but worked out well in Milligan-Lang, British Team Championship (4NCL) 2004, 11...♕f6 12 ♖e1 a6 13 ♘d4 ♘e5 14 ♗f4 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 d6 16 ♘f3 ♗f5 17 ♕d2 h6 18 ♗e5! ♕g6 19 ♘h4 ♕h7 20 ♗xd6 ♘c6 (20...cxd6 21 ♕xd6+ ♗d7 22 ♖xe7 wins) 21 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 22 ♗f8+ ♕d7 23 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 24 ♖ad1+ ♘d4 25 ♖xd4+ ♔c6 26 ♗xg7 1-0.

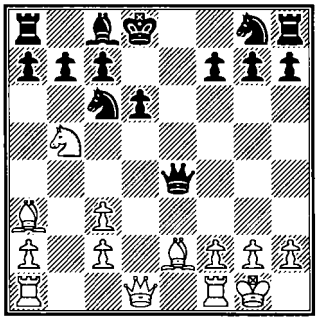
b) 11 ♖e1 f5 (11...a6 12 ♖e4 ♕f6 13 ♖f4 [13 ♘d4 is the right move which will transpose after the old masters shuffle their pieces] 13...♕e6 14 ♖e4 ♕f6 15 ♖f4 ♕e6 16 ♘d4 [this is the position reached if 13 ♘d4 is played] 16...♘xd4 and now instead of 17 ♖xd4 Schiffers-Chigorin, St Petersburg 1897 one should follow the suggestion of Boterill/Harding and choose 17 cxd4 when a sample line runs 17...d6 18 ♖e4 ♕d7 19 ♕h5 f6 20 ♗d2 with the initiative) 12 ♗a3 (12 c4 is Gutman's suggestion to make room for the queen's knight to retreat and he gives the illustrative line 12...a6 13 ♘c3 d6 14 f4 ♖e8 15 ♖b1 ♕f6 16 ♕d2 ♖b8 17 ♗b2 causing serious disruption to Black) 12...♕f6 13 ♕d2 a6 14 ♘d4 d6 when Black has managed to fend off the direct attack and achieve roughly equal chances.



10 ♘xd6!

A sensational sacrifice to tear apart Black's pawn barrier in order

to start an all out attack. I can understand there might be reluctance to give up a knight so I offer 10 ♗a3 as a possible alternative:



a) 10...♗e6? allows the splendid 11 ♗xd6! which destroys Black after 11...cxd6 12 ♕xd6+ ♗d7 13 ♗g4 ♕e7 14 ♕c7+ ♔e8 15 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 16 ♖fe1+ ♘ge7 17 ♘d6+ winning.

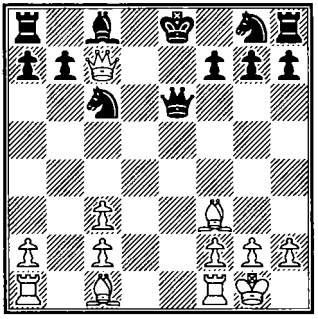
b) 10...♕e6 11 ♖e1 ♘f6 12 ♘d4 ♕d7 13 ♖b1 offers equal opportunities.

c) 10...♗d7 11 ♗h5 ♕f5 12 ♘xc7! (the point of 10 ♗a3 is revealed because now the d6 pawn will fall) 12...♔xc7 13 ♕xd6+ ♔b6 14 ♖ab1+ ♔a5 15 ♗c1 b5 16 ♗e3 ♕xc2 17 ♕xc6 ♖b8 18 ♕c7+ 1-0 David-Germann, German Team Championship 1999.

10...cxd6 11 ♕xd6+ ♔e8

The king moves out of the firing line while an attempt to block the attack with 11...♗d7 allows White to carry on chasing the black king: 12 ♗f4 ♖c8 (12...♕e7 13 ♕c7+ ♔e8 14 ♕xb7 ♖c8 15 ♖fe1 ♘d8 16 ♕xa7 ♘e6 17 ♗d3 ♘f6 18 ♗e5 ♔f8 19 a4 with an edge for White) 13 ♕f8+ ♕e8 14 ♕xg7 ♘ge7 15 ♖fd1 ♕f8 16 ♕f6 ♖g8 17 ♗h6 ♖g6 18 ♕xc6! ♕e8 19 ♕xb7 ♖xh6 20 ♕xa7 with the advantage because Black's pieces are tied down to defence.

12 ♗f3 ♕e6 13 ♕c7



13...♘ge7

Black makes sure the e-file is blocked in anticipation of White swinging a rook to e1.

Instead 13...♘e5!? has since been suggested by Pliester as an improvement when play might continue 14 ♗e2 (or 14 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 15 ♕xb7 ♕c6 16 ♖b1 ♕xb7 17 ♖xb7 ♘d7 when the ending favours Black) 14...♘e7 15 ♖e1 f6 16 ♗a3 ♗d7 (or 16...♕d7 17 ♗b5 ♘7c6 18 ♗xc6 bxc6 19 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 20 ♖ad1+ ♔c7? [20...♔e6 21 f4 ♔f5 22 fxe5 fxe5 23 ♖f1+ ♔g6 24 ♖d6+ ♔h5 25 ♖xc6 with the advantage] 21 ♗d6+ ♔b7 22 ♖b1+ ♔a6 23 ♖e4! forcing mate after 23...♔a5 24 ♗c7+ ♔a6 25 ♖a4) 17 ♖ad1 ♕c6 18 ♕xc6 ♘7xc6 19 f4 ♗e6 20 fxe5 ♘xe5 21 ♗d6 ♖d8 22 ♗xe5 fxe5 23 ♗d3

♖d5 24 ♖b1 ♗c8 25 c4 ♖a5 26 ♖b5! with an edge.

14 ♗a3 ♕d7

White is on top and 14...♘e5 does little to stop the onslaught. For example: 15 ♖ad1 ♗d7 16 ♗xb7 ♖d8 17 ♖fe1 ♘7g6 18 f4 and Black can put the pieces back into the box.

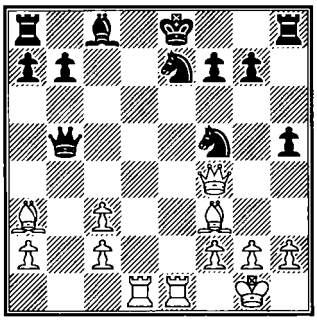
15 ♕g3!

Now obviously Smeets wants to keep the queens on the board in order to pursue the attack.

15...♘f5 16 ♕f4 ♘ce7 17 ♖fe1 h5

Or 17...♕d8 18 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 19 ♕xf5 with a winning advantage.

18 ♖ad1 ♕b5



19 ♕g5

White is certainly winning but he could have finished in style by 19 ♕xf5! ♗xf5 (19...♕xf5 20 ♖xe7+ ♔f8 21 ♖d8 mate) 20 ♖xe7+ ♔f8 21 ♖xb7+ gaining lots of material.

19...♗e6 20 ♗xe7 f6

Of course 20...♘xe7 allows 21 ♕xb5+.

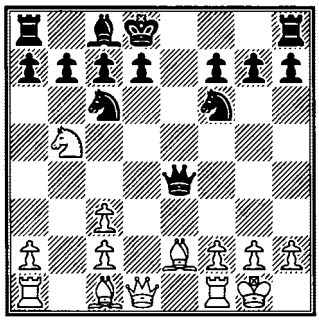
21 ♗xf6 ♔f7 22 ♗xg7! 1-0

Pliester had a few months after this defeat to do plenty of preparation but once again the opening led to problems for him despite adopting the main line with 9...♘f6:

Van der Wiel – Pliester
Dutch Team Championship 2003

This game was played a few months later with Pliester happy to have looked up all possible lines as part of his preparation. However all this was to no avail as he was faced with a new idea:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♕h4 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗e2 ♕xe4 7 ♘db5 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♔d8 9 0-0 ♘f6



This is considered the main line and has been extensively tested.

10 ♖b1

A waiting move to see how Black intends to organise his defence. The rook is always useful on the semi-open b-file because it helps to

reduce the role of the bishop on c8 to that of a mere defender of the b7 pawn.

10...a6

Alternatively Black can play 10..♖e8, for example 11 ♗f3 and now:

a) 11...♕f5 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 ♕xd4! ♕e5 14 ♕a4 d5 15 c4 d4 16 c5 ♖e6 17 ♖b4 (17 ♗b2 also looks good when a sample line runs 17...♕xc5 18 ♗xd4 ♕g5 19 ♗xb7 with superb attacking chances) 17...♗d7 18 ♖xd4 ♔e7 19 ♕b4 a5 and now, instead of 20 ♕xb7 as played in Felsberger-Opl, Vienna 1994, Gutman suggests 20 ♕c3! when 20...♗c6 21 ♗f4 ♕f5 22 ♗xc7 ♗xf3 23 ♗d6+ ♔e8 24 gxf3 gives White an edge.

b) 11...♕c4 12 ♗g5!? a6 (12...♖e5?! 13 ♕d2 a6 14 ♘d4 ♖c5?! [14...d5 runs into 15 ♕f4 with an edge] 15 ♗xf6+ gxf6 16 ♕h6 ♔e7 17 ♖fe1+ ♖e5 18 ♘f5+ ♔e6 (18...♔e8 is met by 19 ♕xf6 which will lead to mate) 19 ♗e4?! (19 ♘e3! is the best shot due to 19...♕xc3 20 ♗g4+ ♔d6 21 ♕f8+ ♘e7 22 ♘f5+ winning easily) 19...d5 20 ♗d3 ♕a4? (20..♕xc3 is better but White is still on top) 21 ♕f8 1-0 Hjartarson-Moulin, New York 1994) 13 ♘d4 ♕xc3 (13...♘xd4 14 cxd4 ♖b8 15 ♕d2 d6 16 ♗xf6+ gxf6 17 ♖fe1 is slightly better for White) 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♖b3 ♕c5 16 ♕d2 with pressure in return for the two pawns according to Gutman, although I rather like 16 ♖h3 threatening to exchange on f6 and then take on h7 which works because 16...♕xg5?? allows 17 ♘xc6 mate.

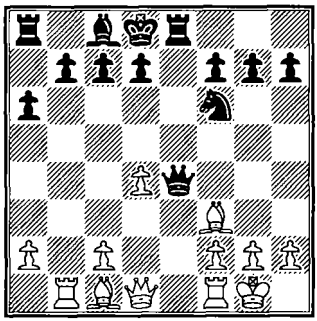
11 ♘d4!?

A rather obvious move but Gutman in his book had only considered 11 ♗f3 which means that some players will now be out of their theoretical knowledge. The point is that Gutman's suggestion allows 11...♕c4 stalling White's attack so Van der Wiel blocks access to that square.

11...♘xd4 12 cxd4 ♖e8

I think 12...♖b8 is a natural response to the long-term worry about the b7 pawn but it backfires after 13 ♗xa6 regaining the pawn thanks to the pin on the b-file.

13 ♗f3



13...♕g6

The queen steps out of the way to avoid further attacks. Other moves are:

a) 13...♕h4 (the queen turns out to be perilously placed on the edge of the board after 14 ♗xb7 ♖b8 [14...♗xb7 15 ♖xb7 gives White an edge] 15 g3 ♖xb7 16 gxh4 ♖xb1 17 ♕d3 when White has the better chances.

b) 13...♕e6 14 ♗g5 h6 (instead 14...♕xa2 15 ♕d3 ♕e6 16 ♕xh7 is very good for White) 15 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 16 ♗xb7 ♖b8 17 ♗xc8 ♔xc8 18 ♖xb8+ ♔xb8 19 c4 when I prefer White because the black king is exposed.

14 ♗f4!?

Van der Wiel is content to bring another piece into the action. Alternatively 14 ♗xb7 looks reasonable to restore material equality: 14...♗xb7 15 ♖xb7 d6 16 c4 ♕g4 (a quiet move such as 16...h6 is met by 17 ♕a4 to reinforce the attack when 17...♕e4 18 d5 favours White) 17 f3 (with the black king so vulnerable it makes sense to keep the queens on) 17...♕c8 18 ♕b3 with the initiative.

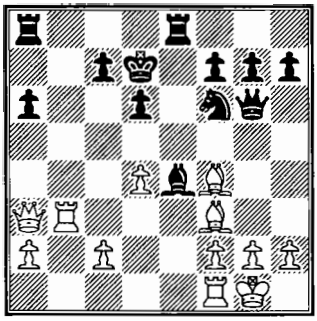
14...d6 15 ♕c1

This move might look a bit strange but in this variation, after developing his queen's bishop, White has had previous success by then manoeuvring his queen via c1 to a3 to increase pressure against the d6 pawn. I think the fundamental problem for Black is how to develop smoothly when the king on d8 is always in the way.

15...♗f5

Black jettisons the b-pawn in order to catch up on development. If 15...♖b8 then 16 c4, introducing the possibility of c4-c5, still leaves Black struggling to find constructive moves.

16 ♖xb7 ♗e4 17 ♖b3 ♔d7 18 ♕a3



White completes his original plan of activating the queen but it lacks presence because Black is busy exchanging off any available attacking pieces.

18...♗xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♕e4 20 ♗h6 ♕g6 21 ♗f4 ♕e4 22 ♗g5?!

White declines the offer to repeat moves and draw and decides to offer another pawn to spice things up. Alternatively 22 ♕b3 ♖e6 23 ♗e3, intending c2-c4, is a reasonable option.

22...♕xd4 23 c3 ♕e5 24 ♗xf6 gxf6 25 ♕a4+ c6 26 g3

Yes, even grandmasters have to prepare against back rank mate! With his own monarch safe White hopes to focus on exploiting the wandering black king.

26...a5?!

I think 26...♕e4 would really test the soundness of the latest pawn sacrifice and allow Black to equalise because 27 ♕d1 is rather passive and not in the spirit of how White would like to conduct the game.

27 ♕b3 ♖ab8 28 ♕xf7+ ♖e7 29 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 30 ♖xf6 ♖b2

White might be a pawn up but the active rook means that with accurate play Black should hold the draw.

31 a4 ♖c2 32 ♖d1 ♖e6?!

A slight inaccuracy because the route to a draw is more easily achieved via 32...d5 33 ♖d3 ♖e4 34 ♖f7+ ♖e7 with equality.

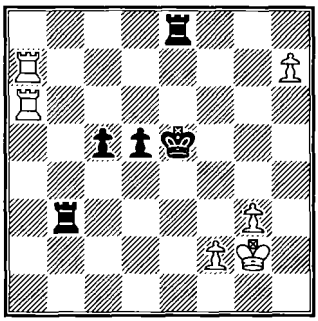
33 ♖f3 d5 34 ♖b1 ♖a2?!

The last chance to make White work for victory is missed as Pliester points out that 34...♔d6 35 ♖b7 h6 36 ♖a7 ♔c5 37 ♖xa5+ ♔c4 is unclear.

35 ♖b7+ ♔d6 36 ♖xh7 ♖xa4 37 h4

White is now doing very well because it is easier to advance his outside passed pawn as it can always be supported by the g-pawn if necessary.

37...♖a1+ 38 ♔g2 a4 39 ♖a7 a3 40 ♖f4 a2 41 h5 c5 42 ♖fa4 ♖c1 43 ♖xa2 ♖xc3 44 h6 ♖b3 45 h7 ♖e8 46 ♖2a6+ ♔e5



47 ♖e7+! 1-0

Conclusion

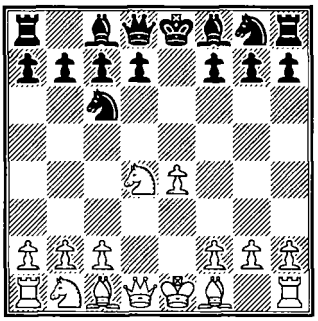
The line with 4...♕h4 can be a serious threat to the unprepared player because defending the e-pawn at all costs leaves White's pieces in a tangle. However a close look at the recommended main line will show that White can gain the advantage and this is the reason why top players are reluctant to get involved in a one-sided struggle.

An old idea with 5 ♘f3 is featured in the game **Fernandez Egea – Mitkov**, where White aims to gain time by chasing the black queen around the board. However 6...♕e7 is a key idea and once the defence gets itself together Black can rely on the extra pawn to obtain a clear advantage. The theme of attacking the c7 pawn now that the queen has moved is explored in **Schuermans – Lane** which features 5 ♘b5. I choose to fend off the threat by exchanging pieces which ensures equality in the opening. The game **Karjakin – Malinin** introduces the main line with 5 ♘c3 followed by 6 ♗e2. Black tries to be different with 6...♘f6 and as a result is thoroughly trounced. I suspect there are plenty of players who will shy away from long variations so **Reinaldo Castineira – Golod** is a chance to see what to do against the obscure 6...♘ge7. White responds in straightforward fashion and is quickly rewarded with a strong initiative. The big debate is whether Black can grab the pawn, move the king and still survive. This position after 8...♔d8 is the focus of the next three games and **Oral – Kantorik**

is rather convincing for White. The good news is that the amazing 11 ♘d6 is not considered in the standard books on the line and is bound to catch a few people out. **Smeets – Pliester** is another game with a piece sacrifice 10 ♘xd6 but this time I also provide an alternative for White because Black could have improved his performance. The use of our recommended main line at top level means that some lines for Black have taken a real hit. A slightly more subtle approach is adopted in **Van der Wiel – Pliester**, where 11 ♘d4 stops Black from playing a book line and is left to think for himself.

Other Black Defences

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4



History

The desire to avoid the main lines has encouraged players of all levels to investigate moves which have a certain surprise element. This has certainly been the case with the Scotch ever since it became so popular. An obscure response does not usually attract much attention until a top player gives it a whirl then suddenly everyone is interested. This is particularly the case with 4...♗b4+ which used to be scorned until Leko tried his luck with it against Kasparov in 1997. However by then various players such as Miles had already done the groundwork on Black's resources – nevertheless the game Fleissig-Alekine, simultaneous exhibition, Bern 1922 shows that nothing is new.

Basic Plan for White

After a handful of moves White is confronted with something a little bit different. I once demonstrated an unusual line to a group of players at a Belgian chess club and was surprised at their response that the line was 'good'. I asked them to expand on their answer and after considering it for a moment or two they changed their opinion to 'not good'. This just about sums up the attitude to most of the little known lines against the Scotch because they are rare and not particularly good.

Basic Plan for Black

The surprise element is usually the main incentive for Black to try and confuse White so he can't play his standard lines. I suspect that despite the occasional revival the only line with any credibility is 4...♗b4+.

Perhaps the most obvious reply is 4...♘xd4 which may appear rather basic but still needs to be addressed in order for White to make the most of his game:

Zapata – Alvarez
New York 1993

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4

If Black tries to be clever with 3...♗b4+? it soon rebounds after 4 c3 ♗a5 (or 4...♗d6, to defend the pawn, when 5 ♗d3 intending kingside castling favours White because Black will have problems developing his queenside pieces) 5 d5 ♘ce7 6 ♘xe5 with a clear advantage, S.Oliver-Donkers, Canberra 2004.

4 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

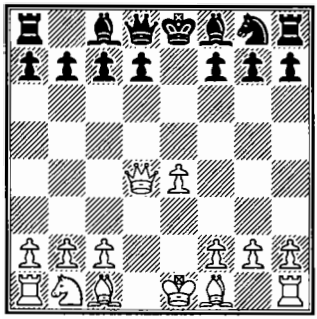
This exchange on d4 is particularly popular with people who don't know much about the opening but it is not a beginner's mistake and has been played by a number of international players.

Other moves:

a) 4...d5?! 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 exd5 ♗b4+?! (6...cxd5?! 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♕xd5 is very good for White or 6...♕xd5 7 ♕e2+ ♕e6 8 ♗e3 which favours White due to the doubled c-pawns) 7 c3 ♗c5 8 ♕e2+! (8 dxc6?? is terrible because of 8...♗xf2+ 9 ♔e2 ♗g4+ 10 ♔xf2 ♕xd1 and White can give up) 8...♘e7 9 dxc6 0-0 10 ♕c4 led to a superior game in A.Osborne-Bloodworth, Torquay 1985.

b) 4...♕f6 tends to transpose to other lines: 5 ♘xc6 (the sequence 5 ♗e3 ♗c5 6 c3 is discussed in greater detail in the Classical Variation 5 ♗e3 chapter) 5...♗c5 6 ♕d2 is the Kasparov variation.

5 ♕xd4



The early exchange of knights is deemed to be a mistake in all the books but usually that is as far as the analysis goes. I think more effort needs to be expended on this position because in my experience lots of club players happily indulge in the exchange just to get out of the main lines. White now has an advantage in the centre but it takes time to prove an edge.

5...♕f6

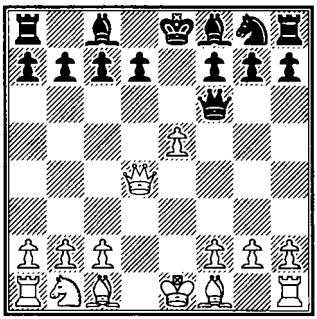
Black offers to exchange queens. Instead 5...d6 is one way to put off White from playing e4-e5 but it restricts the dark-squared bishop and Black tends to end up with a cramped position. S.Lalic-Gjergji, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, saw 6 ♘c3 when the game continued 6...♘f6 7 ♗e2 ♗e7 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 (an aggressive set-up signalling the intention to castle on the kingside) 9...b6?! (a quiet reply concentrating on a queenside

fianchetto to target the e4 pawn) 10 f4 ♗b7 11 ♗f3 c5 12 ♕f2 (the big threat is 13 e5 when 13...♗xf3 14 exf6 wins) 12...♕c7 13 g4 (the advance of the kingside pawns ups the pressure level and Black is obliged to defend) 13...♖fd8 14 g5 ♘e8 15 ♖hg1 ♗f8 (another piece is used to defend but this only underlines the cramped nature of Black's position) 16 f5 f6 17 ♕h4 fxg5 18 ♗xg5 ♖d7 19 ♗e2 ♔h8 20 ♗c4 ♗e7 21 ♗e6 ♗xg5+ 22 ♖xg5 ♖e7 23 ♕xh7+! 1-0

I have to make it very clear that if 5...♘ge7 then 6 ♘c3 transposes to the next main game which means Black players can use this move-order to send a devious message that they are not sure how to handle the position!

6 e5

It makes sense not to play 6 ♕xf6 because 6...♘xf6 activates a black piece and achieves equality.

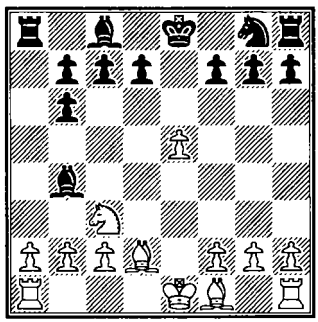


6...♕b6

Once again Black wishes to limit White's influence in the centre by exchanging queens. Instead 6...♕c6, to keep an eye on the c and g-pawns, is harmless: 7 ♘c3 ♗c5 8 ♕g4 ♕g6 9 ♕xg6! (the ending here is in White's favour because the knight goes to d5, securing the initiative) 9...hxg6 10 ♘d5 ♗b6 11 ♗e3 ♗a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ (if 12...♗b6 then 13 ♗b4! really does give Black problems developing his kingside) 13 ♔xd2 ♔d8 14 f4 c6 15 ♘c3 intending ♘e4 with the better chances, Korchnoi-Hatoglou, Athens simul 2002.

7 ♕f4!?

The Colombian grandmaster is not keen to enter the ending against his lower rated opponent and wants to create more tactics in the middlegame. However in this case 7 ♕xb6 need not be an excuse to draw quickly because White has a good practical record after smoothly developing his pieces. For instance after 7...axb6 8 ♘c3 ♗b4 9 ♗d2 White has an edge because it is easier for him to mobilise his forces and there are some tactics associated with ♘b5. For instance:



a) 9...c6, to stop a knight coming to the b5 or d5 squares, is met by 10 ♘e4! ♗xd2+ (10...♗e7 11 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 12 exd6 White is

happy to block in Black's light-squared bishop. 12...♘f6 13 ♗c3 0-0 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♔d2 with a winning ending) 11 ♔xd2 ♘e7 12 ♘d6+ ♔f8 13 ♗c4 attacking the f7 pawn is good news for White.

b) 9...♘e7 10 a3 ♘c6 11 0-0-0 ♗e7 12 ♘d5 ♗d8 13 ♗c3 ♘e7 14 ♘e3 0-0 15 g3 f6 16 ♗c4+ ♔h8 17 f4 (17 exf6 gxf6 18 ♖he1 ♘c6 19 f4 is very good for White because Black has trouble safely developing) 17...♘c6 18 h4 d6? (a desperate move but otherwise the bishop on c8 can't move) 19 exd6 cxd6 20 ♖xd6 winning, Kutuzovic-Medancic, Umag 2000.

c) 9...f6 10 ♘d5 ♗xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 ♔d8 12 exf6 ♘xf6 (or 12...gxf6 13 ♗d3 ♘e7 14 ♘xf6 ♖f8 15 ♘xh7 ♖xf2+ 16 ♔e3 ♖xg2 17 ♖af1 with the better development and a strong passed h-pawn) 13 ♘xf6 gxf6 14 ♗d3 ♖a5 15 b4 (perhaps 15 ♖he1 is better, then 15...♖g5 16 g3 d5 17 ♖e3 intending to double rooks and play ♖e7 gives good chances) 15...♖g5 16 g3 d5 17 a4 c6 (17...c5!? is met by 18 f4 and White is still better) 18 a5 bxa5 19 ♖xa5 ♔c7 20 ♖a8 gives White an edge, Areshchenko-Ovsejevitsch, Ordzhonikidze 2001.

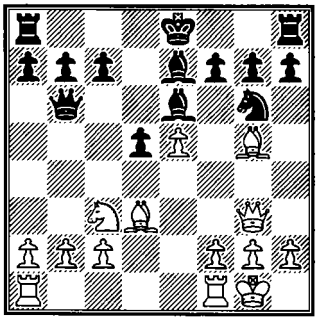
7...d5 8 ♘c3 ♗e6 9 ♗d3

White carries on developing in preparation for kingside castling.

9...♘e7 10 0-0 ♘g6 11 ♕g3 ♗e7

Instead 11...0-0-0 would seem to be logical but this allows White to quickly launch an attack with a4, intending a5 to harass the black queen.

12 ♗g5!



An inspired move to accelerate White's development and give Black enough options to go astray.

12...♕xb2?

Alvarez cannot resist the lure of a free pawn but this allows White to create an attack.

Other moves are:

a) 12...0-0 13 ♗xg6 ♗xg5 14 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15 ♕xg5 ♕xb2 16 ♕d2 threatening ♘xd5 and ♖fb1 with advantage.

b) 12...♗xg5 13 ♕xg5 0-0 14 ♖fe1 (or 14 b3 ♕d4 15 ♗xg6 hxg6 16 ♕g3 is level) 14...♕xb2 15 ♕d2 b6? (15...♕b6 16 ♗xg6 hxg6 17 ♘xd5 with roughly equal chances) 16 a3 traps the queen.

13 ♗xe7 ♔xe7

After 13...♘xe7 White can triumph with the star move 14 ♘b5 (intending ♖fb1) 14...♘c6 15 f4 ♕b4 16 ♘xc7+ winning.

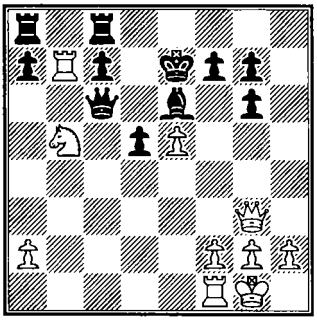
14 ♗xg6 hxg6 15 ♖ab1 ♕xc2

On 15...♕a3? White reveals a tactic by 16 ♘xd5+ ♗xd5 17 ♕xa3+ when the game is already over.

16 ♖xb7 ♖hc8 17 ♘b5

The obvious difference is that the white attack is enhanced by the black king being marooned in the middle of the board. By contrast Black has no sign of counterplay because the white king is safely castled.

17...♕c6



18 ♖xa7!

A clever continuation based on 18...♖xa7 19 ♘xa7 forking the major pieces or 18...♕xb5 19 ♕a3+ ♔d7 20 ♖xa8 also with a clear advantage.

18...♕c5 19 ♕h4+ ♔d7 20 ♕a4 ♕c6 21 ♕b4

Actually 21 ♕a5! is more accurate because 21...♔d8 is routed by 22 ♘d4 with victory already in sight.

21...♔d8 22 ♕a3! ♔d7

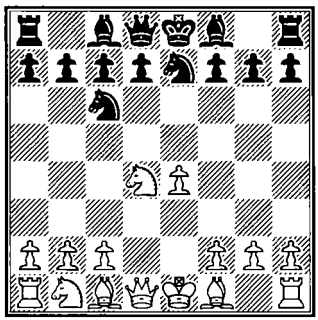
Alvarez has run out of constructive moves since 22...♖ab8 23 ♘xc7 ♖xc7 24 ♕f8+ ♕e8 25 ♕xe8+ ♔xe8 26 ♖xc7 gives White a winning ending, while 22...♗f5 allows 23 ♘d4 when the black queen can no longer safely defend the queen's rook.

23 ♕a5 ♔d8 24 ♘d4 1-0

The option 4...♘ge7 has been tested by strong players but that doesn't make it any better and it is still regarded as a second rate choice.

Jonkman – Upton
Cork 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘ge7



Grandmaster Ivan Sokolov is probably the best known supporter of the system which however does tend to be used only as a surprise weapon.

5 ♘c3 ♘xd4 6 ♕xd4

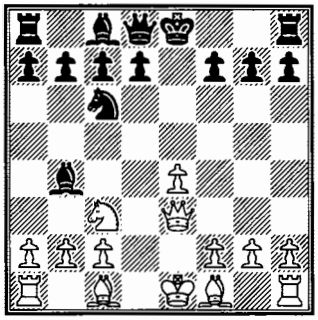
I should point out that this position can be reached via the

move-order 4...♘xd4 5 ♕xd4 ♘e7 6 ♘c3.

6...♘c6 7 ♕d2

I like this straightforward idea to fianchetto and castle queenside, thereby creating attacking chances on the kingside.

On 7 ♕e3 ♗b4



a) 7...b6?! 8 ♗c4 ♘e5 (Black has to be wary of continuing with the plan of 8...♗b7 due to 9 ♕g3 when Black has problems safely developing the kingside) 9 ♗b3 ♗a6 (Black cuts out the option of castling kingside but it is a hollow victory because the white king was always bound for the other flank) 10 ♕g3 ♕f6? 11 ♘d5 ♕d6 12 ♗f4 f6 13 0-0-0 ♗b7 14 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15 ♗xe5 with a winning advantage, Svidler - Wissmann, Darmstadt simul 2000.

b) 7...♘b4 8 ♗d3 (8 ♕d2, intending a queenside fianchetto, is worth a thought) 8...c6 9 0-0 ♘xd3 10 ♕xd3 b5 11 e5 ♗e7 12 ♕g3 ♔f8 (Black gives up castling rights because 12...0-0 runs into 13 ♗h6 winning material) 13 ♘e4 h5 14 h3 h4 15 ♕f4 ♖h5 16 ♖e1 ♔g8 17 ♗e3 ♕f8 18 ♖ad1 (White develops smoothly while Black is just waiting to see what happens!) 18...a5 19 ♗b6 a4 20 ♗c7 b4 21 ♗d6 ♖a5 22 ♕g4 ♖hxe5 23 ♘f6+! ♗xf6 24 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 25 ♕xb4+ 1-0 Vysochin-Takhirov, Bydgoszcz 2000.

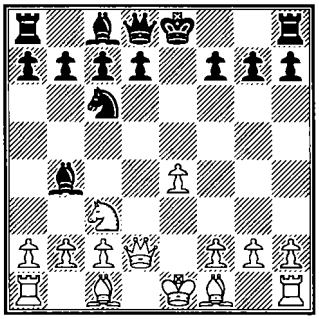
c) 7...g6 8 ♗d2 ♗g7 9 0-0-0 ♕f6 10 f4 0-0 11 e5 ♕e6 12 ♕e4 d6 13 ♗c4 ♕e8 (13...♕f5 14 ♕xf5 ♗xf5 15 exd6 cxd6 16 ♘b5 promises White decent chances because the d6 pawn is weak) 14 ♘d5!? (14 exd6! ♗xc3 [14...cxd6 15 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 16 ♘b5 is good for White] 15 ♕xe8 ♗xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 ♖xe8 17 d7 ♖e7! [17...♗xd7? 18 ♖xd7 ♖e7 19 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 20 ♖d1 when the rook invades on the seventh rank with a promising ending] 18 d8=♕+ ♘xd8 19 ♖xd8+ ♔g7 20 ♗d5!? c6 21 ♗f3 ♖d7 22 ♖e8 and White is on top because Black will take time to develop the queenside pieces) 14...♗f5 15 ♕e3 dxe5! 16 ♘xc7 gave White an excellent game although Black won through a blunder, Shaked-Spassky, Cannes 1998.

d) 7...♗b4 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 d6 11 0-0-0 ♕e7 12 g4 f6 (or 12...♗xg4 13 ♖g1 ♗xd1? 14 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 15 ♕h6 ♕xe4 16 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 17 ♖h8 mate) 13 ♖g1 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♘f7 15 h4 ♖e8 16 f3 h6 17 ♖d2 ♗d7 18 ♗c4 gave White good attacking chances, Vallejo Pons-Campora, Barcelona 2000.

7...♗e7

Black is content to get his pieces out in preparation for kingside castling.

Also possible are:



a) 7...♗c5!? 8 b3 a6 (8...0-0!? 9 ♗b2 ♕f6 10 f4 d6 11 0-0-0 with a level position) 9 ♗b2 ♗d4 10 g3 d6 11 ♗g2 ♗e6 12 f4 f6 13 0-0-0 ♕d7 14 ♗f3 ♗g4 15 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 16 ♘d5 ♗xb2+ 17 ♔xb2 0-0-0 18 ♖he1 with equal chances, Hansen-Keitlinghaus, German Team Championship 2004.

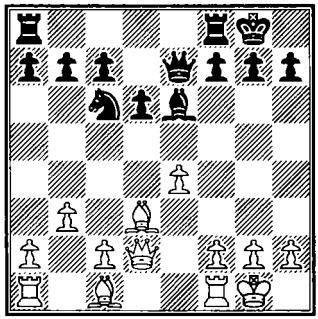
b) 7...♗b4?! 8 a3 ♗a5 (8...♗e7 9 ♘d5 0-0 10 ♗c4 d6 11 0-0 is equal) 9 b4! ♗b6 10 ♘d5 (maybe 10 ♗b2 is a decent alternative when 10...0-0 11 ♗d3 d6 12 0-0 gives White a slight edge) 10...0-0 11 ♗b2 ♖e8 12 0-0-0! d6 (12...♖xe4? allows White to create some tactics 13 ♗d3 ♖e8 [13...♖e6 14 ♗f5 ♖e8 15 ♗f6! gxf6 16 ♕h6 when Black will be mated] 14 ♗f6! gxf6 15 ♕h6 and White wins) 13 f3 ♗e6 14 ♔b1 ♗xd5 15 ♕xd5 a5 16 b5 ♘e7 17 ♕d2 ♘g6 18 h4 gave White the initiative in Hjartarson-Keitlinghaus, Copenhagen 1997.

c) 7...d6 8 g3 (8 ♗c4, intending to castle kingside, is a reasonable alternative) 8...g6 9 ♗g2 ♗g7 10 b3 f5 11 ♗b2 fxe4 12 0-0-0 ♕f6 13 ♘a4 ♕f7 14 ♗xe4 0-0 15 f4 ♘e7 16 ♘c3 (White has more space but it is difficult to convert that into victory) 16...♖b8 17 ♘d5 ♗xb2+ 18 ♔xb2 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♗e6 20 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 21 ♖he1 ♕f6+ 22 ♔b1 ♕f7 23 ♖e3 a6?! (this is too cautious and 23...♖be8 is a superior choice with equal chances) 24 ♖de1 ♖fe8 25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 27 ♕d5+ ♔h8 28 ♕xb7 ♕e1+ 29 ♔b2 1-0 Zhao-G.Xie, Canberra 2001.

8 ♘d5 0-0 9 ♗d3 d6 10 0-0

Jonkman is steadily developing his pieces and with a queen on d2 the plan of a queenside fianchetto is attractive.

10...♗e6 11 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 12 b3



The next part of the opening plan is to bring the dark-squared bishop into play. White hopes this will have more influence now that Black's bishop has been exchanged.

12...♘e5 13 ♗e2 f5

Black needs to respond positively otherwise White will simply push back the knight with f2-f4.

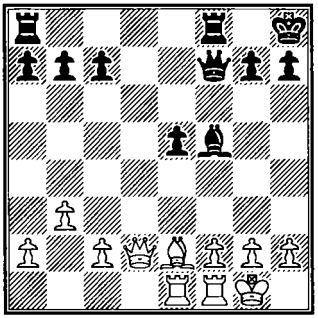
14 exf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗b2 ♔h8 16 ♖ae1

Jonkman is steadily improving his pieces by centralising his queen's rook. This move also prepares a possible pin on the e-file by setting the trap f2-f4 followed by a discovered attack after moving the light-squared bishop.

16...♕f7?!

Black really needs to support his knight so he is not saddled with an isolated e-pawn. Therefore the dubious-looking 16...♕f6 is required when the immediate 17 f4 gives a slight edge upon 17...♘c4 18 ♗xc4 ♕xb2 19 ♖e7.

17 ♗xe5 dxe5



18 ♗f3

The middlegame certainly favours White because he will now win a pawn.

18...♖ad8 19 ♕c3 e4 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖d6

An enterprising try is 21...♖d1 but 22 f3 ♖xf1+ 23 ♔xf1 is fine for White.

22 ♕e3 ♕f5 23 ♖e1

This is a good model of how to win when White is ahead on material. The simple plan is to minimise counterplay and then provoke concessions.

23...h6 24 h3

Yes, both sides are making sure there are no threats associated with back rank mates.

24...b6 25 a4 a5 26 ♖c4 c5 27 ♖e4 ♖df6 28 ♖e2 ♖d6 29 ♔h2 ♖fd8 30 ♖e7 ♕g6 31 ♕e5

White is steadily making improvements to his position by grabbing more space.

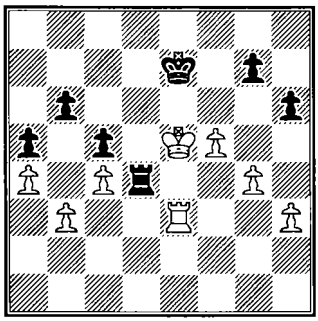
31...♖d5 32 ♕f4 ♕d6

Upton is hoping that there might be a way out in the rook ending and he can salvage a draw – but the odds are against him.

33 ♕xd6 ♖8xd6 34 c4 ♖d3 35 ♖2e3 ♖xe3 36 ♖xe3 ♔h7 37 ♔g3 ♖d2 38 ♖f3 ♖d4 39 ♖f4 ♖d3+ 40 ♖f3 ♖d4 41 ♖e3 ♖d2 42 f4

The only way to win with an extra pawn is to advance it!

42...♔g8 43 ♔f3 ♔f7 44 f5 ♖b2 45 g4 ♖d2 46 ♔f4 ♖d4+ 47 ♔e5 ♔e7



48 f6+!

A clever breakthrough which allows White to wreak havoc with his rook.

48...gxf6+ 49 ♔f5+ ♔f7 50 ♖e6 b5

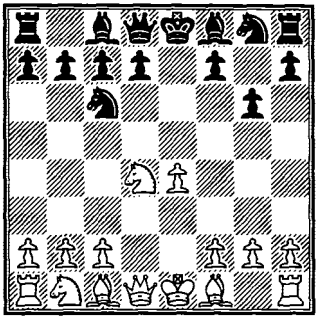
This is just desperate. 50...♖f4+ might look impressive but Jonkman has already calculated the line 51 ♔xf4 ♔xe6 52 ♔e4 ♔e7 (Black needs to retreat so the white king is ready to invade and destroy) 53 ♔d5 ♔d7 54 h4 ♔e7 55 ♔c6 ♔e6 56 ♔xb6 and White wins.

51 ♖xf6+ ♔g7 52 ♖g6+ ♔h7 53 axb5 ♖d3 54 ♖a6 ♖xb3 55 ♖a7+ ♔g8 56 ♔e5 ♖xh3 57 b6 1-0

The next game sees Black exploring the possibility of a quick kingside fianchetto to exert press re on the centre. White responds with an aggressive set-up:

Zakharstov-Kagirov
Voronezh 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6



5 ♘c3

White just carries on developing.

Also:

a) After the alternative 5 ♘xc6 I think Black is let off the hook by not trying to punish the kingside fianchetto: 5...bxc6 6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 0-0 ♘e7 8 c3 0-0 9 f4 d5! 10 ♗e3 (if 10 e5 then 10...f6 breaks up the pawn chain with equal chances) 10....dxe4 11 ♗xe4 ♘d5 12 ♗d4 ♖e8 13 ♕f3? (13 ♗xd5 cxd5 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♕d4+ ♔g8 16 ♘d2 is equal) 13....♗g4! 14 ♕d3 (if 14 ♕xg4 then ♗xd4+ 15 cxd4 ♖xe4 is good for Black) 14...♘b4! 15 ♕c4 (of co rse 15 cxb4 allows 15....♕xd4+ when Black would win at least a piece) 15....♖xe4 16 ♕xb4 ♖b8 17 ♕c5 ♖xd4! 0-1 Bolt-Berry, Leuven 2000.

b) 5 ♗e3 ♗g7 6 c3 (the motivation is to reduce the effectiveness of Black's dark-squared bishop but the c3 square is the best place for his queen's knight) 6....♘f6 7 f3 0-0 8 ♗c4 (8 ♗e2 intending to castle kingside is a safe choice) 8....♘e5 9 ♗b3 d5! 10 ♗f4 ♖e8 11 ♗g5? dxe4 12 fxe4 c5 13 ♘b5 ♘d3+ 14 ♔f1 ♖xe4 with a winning advantage, S.Hanly-S.Short, Cork 2005.

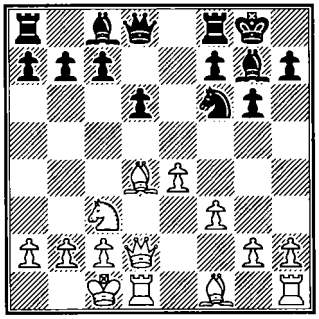
5...♗g7 6 ♗e3 d6

I think 6....♘f6 is a careless move-order due to 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5 when the knight has no decent square. E.Berg-Santos, Bled Olympiad 2002, continued: 8...♘d5 9 ♘xd5 cxd5 10 ♕xd5 ♖b8 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 c3 with the brighter prospects due to the extra pawn.

7 ♕d2 ♘xd4

Or 7...♗d7 8 0-0-0 a6 9 f3 ♗e6 10 f4 (I prefer 10 ♘xe6 when 10...fxe6 11.♗c4 is better for White) 10...♕d7 11 h3 h5 12 g3 ♘ge7 13 ♗g2 0-0-0 14 a3 ½-½ S.Hanly-Carey, Cork 2005. It is worth watching out for 7...♘f6 which transposes to the main game after 8 f3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4.

8 ♗xd4 ♘f6 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 f3

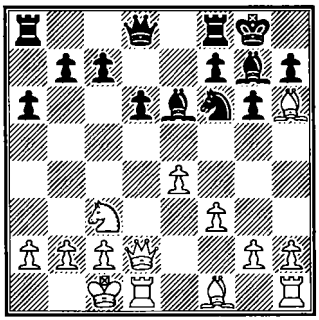


This is the key position of the line. If you look up games in the Scotch this line is rarely recommended and as a consequence the results look average for White. However, once it is realised that this position is in fact identical to a line in the 150 Attack in the Pirc then the scoring turns out to be hugely in White's favour. The transposition occurs after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 ♗e3 ♗g7 5 ♕d2 0-0 6 f3 ♘c6 7 0-0-0 e5 8 ♘ge2 exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4. Indeed, I changed the move-order of the main game but that originated from the Philidor opening: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♕d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♘c6 9 f3 ♘xd4 10 ♗xd4.

10....♗e6 11 g4

The kingside pawns are thrust forward as part of the attacking strategy. If White is looking for a different approach then I would take a closer look at 11 ♗e3 which is designed to cope with the prospect of ...c7-c5 because now White can just take on d6.

Play might continue 11...a6 12 ♗h6:



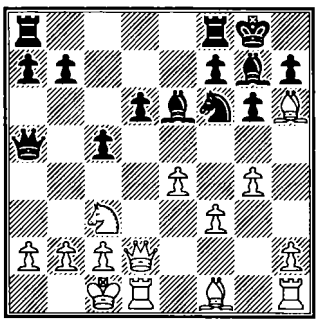
a) 12...b5 13 h4 b4 14 ♘d5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 a5 16 h5 a4 (16...♘xh5 17 g4 ♘f6 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♕h6+ ♔g8 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♖xh5! gxh5 22 ♗d3 wins) 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♕xb4! (White has time to grab the pawn because Black's counterplay is lightweight) 19...a3 20 b3 ♕e7 21 ♕d4 ♖fe8 22 ♗b5 gave White a winning position, Shaw-Soh, Gibraltar 2003.

b) 12...♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 ♕e7 14 h4 b5 15 h5 (the good thing about White's middlegame plan is that it is all about attacking with a kingside pawn storm) 15...b4 16 ♘e2 ♗c4 17 ♘f4 ♗xf1 18 ♖dxf1 ♖fb8 19 g4 ♕f8 20 hxg6 ♕xh6 21 ♖xh6 hxg6 22 g5 ♔g7 23 ♖fh1 ♘g8 24 ♖h7+ ♔f8 25 ♘d5

c6 26 ♘c7 ♖a7 27 ♘e6+ ♔e8 28 ♖g7 ♔e7 29 ♘d4 ♔f8 30 ♖xg8+ (30 ♖hh7! ♖ab7 31 ♘e6+ wins) 30...♔xg8 31 ♘xc6 when the extra material gave White the advantage in Emms-Cox, Telford 2003.

11...c5 12 ♗e3 ♕a5 13 ♗h6

Instead 13 ♕xd6 just gives Black good compensation after 13 ...♘d7 14 ♕d2 ♘e5 with the initiative.



13....♖fd8

Black finds time to defend the d-pawn. It is still being debated how Black should continue:

a) 13...♗xa2? 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♘xa2 ♕xa2 16 ♕c3! intending g5 wins.

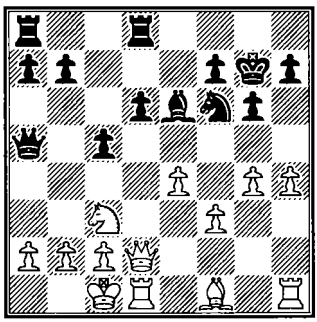
b) 13....b5, with the idea of giving up the b-pawn to open lines, has fared poorly: 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♘xb5 and now:

b1) 15...♕xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 d5 (if 16...♗xa2? then 17 b3 traps the bishop) 17 g5 ♘h5 18 exd5 with a big advantage, Potkin-Flores, Athens 2001.

b2) 15...♕xa2 16 ♕c3 (the monster threat is g4-g5) 16...a6 (16...h6 17 h4 ♖h8 18 ♘xd6 with the brighter prospects) 17 ♘c7 ♖ab8 18 g5 when White will win a piece, Schalkx-Carlier, Belgium Team Championship 2001.

c) 13...♗xh6 14 ♕xh6 b5 (14...♗xa2 is a bit slow in view of 15 h4 which accelerates the attack. For instance: 15...♗e6 16 h5 ♕a1+ 17 ♔d2 ♕xb2 18 ♖b1! ♕a3 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♖xh5 winning) 15 ♗xb5 ♖ab8 16 ♕f4 (it is possible you might catch a few people out here if Black is trying to improve on the game Makarichev-Tukmakov, Palma de Mallorca 1989, which continued with 16 a4 and was featured in my previous book on the Scotch) 16....♘e8 17 ♗xe8 ♖fxe8 18 ♖xd6 ♗xa2 19 ♕f6 ♗e6 20 ♖hd1 ♕a1+ 21 ♔d2 ♕a5 (21....♕xb2 22 ♖b1 ♕a3 23 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 24 ♖xe6! fxe6 25 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♕e5+ wins material) 22 ♔e3 ♖xb2? 23 ♖xe6! 1-0 Korneev-Garcia Castro, Pontevedra 2003.

14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 h4



15...a6

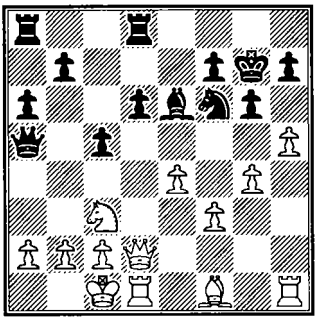
Black wants to advance the b-pawn but White's attack is very fast.

a) A bid to stem the attack with 15...h5 does not work after 16 gxh5 ♘xh5 17 a3 ♖ab8 18 ♖g1 b5 19 ♕g5 (threatening ♕xh5 is good news for White) 19....♘f6 20 h5 and Black is in trouble.

b) 15...c4 16 g5 ♘h5 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♕d4+ ♔g8 19 ♕xc4 when White is on top.

c) 15...d5?! 16 g5 (pushing the defender away from the d5 pawn is a simple way to succeed) 16...♘h5 17 exd5 ♔g8 18 ♕e3 ♗f5 19 ♗d3 gave White the better position in Mazi-Franz, St Veit 2001.

16 h5



16...♘g8

Kagirov covers the h6 square to try and prevent the queen from stepping up the attack. The problem is that White can continue to force compromises in pursuit of the black king, while Black is merely threatening the a-pawn.

17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♔b1

A precaution to protect the a-pawn before carrying on with the onslaught.

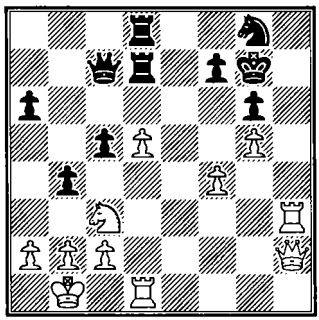
18....♖d7 19 g5 ♖ad8 20 ♗h3

A nice idea to further break down the defensive barrier because if 20...♗xh3 21 ♖xh3 leaves the d5 square unguarded and White can occupy it with the knight.

20....d5 21 exd5 ♗xh3 22 ♖xh3 ♕c7

Black forlornly hopes to stop ♕h2 by an instant exchange but White can effortlessly block the idea.

23 f4 b5 24 ♕h2 b4



25 ♖h8!

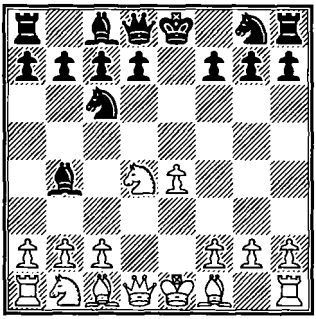
The threat to the knight is ignored in favour of a mating attack.

25...bxc3 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♖e1 1-0

The next step is to examine a quirky move which has become just about acceptable at international level.

Ehlvest – Christiansen
New York 2003

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗b4+!?



Though it looks a bit odd this is a serious alternative which has attracted the attention of strong players looking for a surprise weapon.

5 c3

White is content to block the check with this pawn move which also supports the knight on d4. Black would argue that now he can steer the game towards variations where the option ♘c3 might have been useful. And 5 ♘c3 is fine if you already play the Four Knights variation – into which it transposes after 5...♘f6.

5...♗e7

This is a passive reply aiming for a solid set-up.

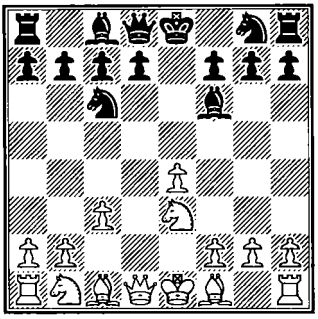
6 ♘f5!?

As part of a subtle manoeuvre, the Estonian selects a simple plan of threatening the g7 pawn. I was interested in recommending 6 ♗c4 but could not find a way to make significant progress against 6...♘f6. For instance: 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♗xd5 cxd5 10 ♕xd5 ♗a6! (this is the key move to cut off White from castling kingside and is made possible because there is no bishop on c5 compared to other lines) 11 c4 0-0 (11 ..c6 12 ♕e4 0-0 13 0-0 f6 14 ♖d1 fxe5 15 ♗e3 [if 15 ♕xe5 then 15...♗xc4 and the open board will favour Black's pair of bishops] 15...♕c7 16 c5 ♗e2 17 ♖d2 ♗h5 18 ♘c3 ♖ab8 19 f3 ♗g6 20 ♕c4+ ♗f7 21 ♕a6 ♗e6 with roughly equal chances, Kholmov-Malaniuk, Katowice 1993.) 12 0-0 c6 13 ♕d4 d5 14 exd6 (14 b3 dxc4 15 ♖d1 ♕xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♖fd8 with an edge due to the superior development) 14...♗xd6 15 ♗f4 ♗e7 16 ♕e4 ♗f6 17 ♘c3 ♕b6 18 ♘a4 ♕b4 (or 18...♕a5 19 ♕c2 ♖ad8 20 ♖ad1 with roughly equal opportunities) 19 ♕xc6 ♗xc4 20 ♗d6 ♕b5 21 ♕xb5 ♗xb5 22 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 23 b3 ½-½ Medvegy-Hecht, Austrian Team Championship 2001, in view of 23...♗xf1 24 ♖xf1 ♖c8 25 a3 ♖c2 with a likely draw.

6...♗f6

Or 6...g6 7 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 8 ♗d3 ♘f6 9 0-0 d6 (9...♘xe4? walks into 10 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 11 ♖e1 winning) 10 ♖e1 is easier for White to develop and Black has dark square weaknesses on the kingside.

7 ♘e3



The knight does a good job here because Black usually breaks out with ...d5 at some point and now that is much more difficult.

7...g6

The former USA champion adopts a logical plan of a kingside fianchetto to tuck his bishop out of harm's way.

Also possible:

a) 7...♘ge7 8 ♘g4 (White is content to exchange the bishop which is normally an important piece for Black in this opening) 8...♘g6 9 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♘d2 d6 12 ♕c2 ♘ge5 13 h3 ♕g6 14 g4!? (a sharp move because it stops Black from playing ...f7-f5) 14...d5 15 f4 ♕h6 16 ♗g2 dxe4 17 ♕xe4 (maybe 17 ♗xe4 is more precise because 17...♘g6 18 0-0-0 gives White a strong attack because the queen on h6 is cornered on the edge of the board) 17...f5 18 fxe5 ♕h4+ 19 ♗f2 ♕xf2+ 20 ♔xf2 fxe4+ 21 ♔g3 ♘xe5 22 ♘xe4 ♗d7 23 ♘c5 with the initiative, Kulicov-Ovod, St Petersburg 2000.

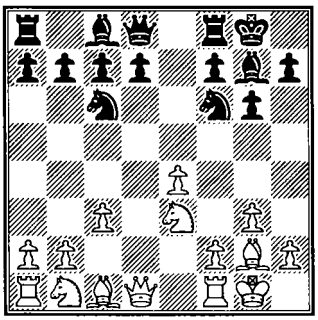
b) 7...d6 8 ♗e2 ♘ge7 9 0-0 0-0 10 f4 ♘g6 11 ♘d5 ♖e8 12 ♗d3 (12 ♕d3, to protect the e-pawn, is reasonable and maintains his slight space advantage) 12...♘b8 13 ♘d2 ♘d7 14 ♗c2 c6 15 ♘e3 (15 ♘xf6+, to get rid of the bishop, is worth contemplating) 15...b5 16 ♔h1 ♘c5 17 ♕f3 led to a level position in Popescu-Vajda, Bucharest 1995.

c) 7...♗g5 8 g3 ♗xe3 (Black really needs to exchange pieces before White can play f2-f4 and force the bishop to retreat) 9 ♗xe3 ♘f6 10 ♗g2 0-0 11 c4 (as usual in this line White fastens his grip on the d5 square and makes room for the queen's knight to come to the c3 square) 11...d6 12 0-0 ♗e6 13 b3 ♕d7 14 ♗g5 ♘e8 15 ♖e1 ♗g4 16 f3 ♗h3 17 ♘c3 with equal chances, Sax-Djuric, Vicenza 1995.

8 g3 ♗g7 9 ♗g2 ♘f6

The Scotch has now been transformed to a position where both players have fianchettoed on the kingside so White will have to rely on his slight space advantage.

10 0-0 0-0



11 c4

The c-pawn is advanced to put a clamp on Black's usual ploy of breaking out with a timely ...d5 and

it also makes room for the queen's knight to be developed to its best square on c3.

11...d6 12 ♘c3 ♖e8 13 ♖b1

The rook gets out of the way to avoid a pin on the a1-h8 diagonal and this is evident upon 13 b3? which fails due to 13...♘xe4! 14 ♘xe4 ♗xa1.

13...a5 14 b3 ♘g4

Black has a passive position and in such a situation it makes sense to exchange pieces to create room for manoeuvre.

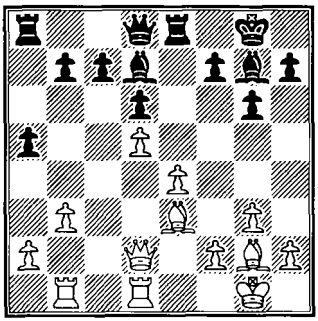
15 ♘cd5

Or 15 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 16 ♕xg4 ♗xc3 with equal chances.

15...♘xe3 16 ♗xe3 ♘b4!

Christiansen is a strong grandmaster and quickly realises that White's powerful central knight needs to be exchanged to reduce the pressure.

17 ♕d2 ♘xd5 18 cxd5 ♗d7 19 ♖fd1



This move does not look very impressive, but it is timely provocation for the simplification that now follows.

19...c5?

An error but it is not that obvious to someone who is once again seeking exchanges to ease his way to a draw. Maybe 19...f5 should be considered when 20 ♗g5 ♕c8 21 ♖e1 offers roughly equal chances.

20 dxc6 ♗xc6 21 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♗xe4?!

Black had calculated that the ending would be equal but White can use both of his rooks and that makes all the difference. 22...a4! is the move that would give Black better chances of survival.

23 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♖c1

Ehlvest wants to send the rook to the seventh rank in order to round up Black's queenside pawns.

24...♖e7

Or 24...a4 25 ♖d7 axb3 26 axb3 ♖b4 27 ♖cc7 with the advantage.

25 a4!

White blocks the a-pawn so that the queen's rook on a8 is obliged to defend.

25...h5

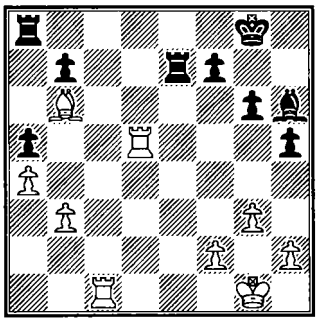
Black is struggling to hold the position and just makes room for his king. Instead 25...♗b2 26 ♖c2 allows White to use his rooks to good effect. For instance: 26...♗a3

27 ♖d5 ♗b4 28 ♗g5! ♖e1+ 29 ♔g2 ♖b1 30 ♖c7 ♖xb3 31 ♖dd7 ♖f8 32 ♗h6 and White has a winning advantage.

26 ♖d5 ♗f8

The a5 pawn is in jeopardy and Black has no decent defence. After 26...♖a6 White can pile on the pressure by 27 ♖cc5 b6 28 ♖c6 when Black's queenside pawns fall because 28...♖b7 29 ♖b5 is too strong.

27 ♗b6 ♗h6



28 ♖c7!

A precise way to stay on course for victory: White exchanges Black's active rook before winning a pawn.

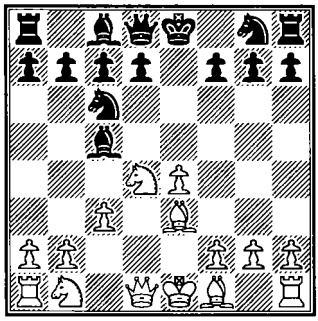
28...♖xc7 29 ♗xc7 ♖c8 30 ♗xa5 ♖c1+ 31 ♔g2 ♖c2 32 ♗b6 ♗g7 33 ♖d8+ 1-0

Black resigned because 33...♔h7 is met by 34 ♖b8 followed by taking the b-pawn when the a-pawn will stroll to the eighth rank.

It is also possible to play more energetically in the opening with 5...♗c5:

Afek-Wantiez
Belgian Team Championship 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗b4+ 5 c3 ♗c5 6 ♗e3



The first trap is set – the threat being ♘xc6 followed by ♗xc5.

6...♗b6 7 ♗c4

The reason why I chose this line is that it should feel comfortable for those who also play the line 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4. Here are a couple of alternatives:

a) 7 g3 ♘f6 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8 10 ♘d2 d5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♖e1 ♘g4? (12...♖b8 is a positive move when 13 b3 leads to a level game) 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 exd5 ♖xe1+ 15 ♕xe1 cxd5 16 ♗xd5! with a good position because the bishop is taboo due to the threat of back rank mate, Duarte-Rubinetti, Pinamar 2005.

b) 7 ♕g4 is the most aggressive choice and had a spurt of popularity when Kasparov used it in a rapidplay game – however this prompted Black to take a closer look at the line: 7...♕f6 8 ♕g3 ♕g6! 9 ♘f5 (perhaps 9 ♘d2!? should be considered) 9...d6! (the key move for Black because the threat to the g7 pawn is ignored) 10 ♗xb6 (or 10 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 11 ♘f5 ♗xf5 12 exf5 ♕xg3 13 hxg3 ♗xe3 14 fxe3 ♘f6 15 ♗d3 ♖e8 16 ♔e2 ♘e5 with equal chances) 10...axb6 11 ♘e3 (11 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 12 ♘f5 ♗xf5 13 exf5 ♕xf5 with equal chances) 11...♘f6 12 f3?! (12 ♕xg6 hxg6 13 ♘d2 ♗e6 is level) 12...♕h6! 13 ♕f2?! d5! 14 ♘a3! (14 exd5 is met by 14...♘xd5! 15 ♘xd5 ♕c1+ 16 ♔e2 0-0 17 ♘xc7 ♕xb2+ 18 ♘d2 ♕xa1 19 ♘xa8 ♖e8+ 20 ♘e4 ♕xa2+ with a winning advantage) 14...dxe4 15 ♘b5 0-0 16 ♘xc7 ♖a5 (16...exf3!? 17 ♘xa8 ♖e8 looks promising for Black as well) 17 b4?! ♖h5 with the initiative, Nakamura-Goldin, Buenos Aires 2003.

7...♘ge7

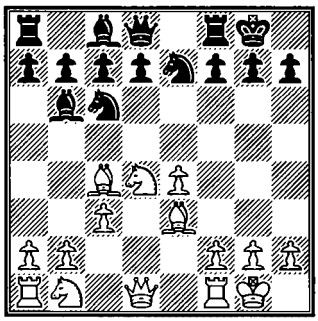
Black carries on with his development in preparation for kingside castling.

Also possible are:

a) 7...f6 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 e5 ♗xe3 10 exf6 (White can win a pawn upon 10 fxe3 ♘d5 11 ♗xd5 cxd5 12 ♕xd5 but 12...♗a6 is very irritating because kingside castling is temporarily prevented while 13 c4 fails to stop the problem because 13...♕h4+! 14 ♔d1 ♖b8 is better for Black) 10...♗h6 11 ♕e2+ ♔f8 12 fxg7+ ♗xg7 13 0-0 (White's advantage is based upon his safer king and better co-ordinated pieces) 13...d5 14 ♗a6 ♗e6 15 ♘d2 (or 15 ♗b7!? ♖b8 16 ♗xc6 ♖g8 17 ♗a4?! ♗h3! 18 gxh3 ♗xc3+ 19 ♔h1 ♗xb2 20 ♘d2 ♗xa1 21 ♖xa1 ♕g5 and Black has good attacking chances) 15...c5 16 c4 ♖b8 17 ♘b3 d4 18 ♘xc5 ♗f5 19 ♕f3 ♕g5 20 ♖fe1 ♗f6 21 ♘e4 with the advantage, Manca-Stefanova, Saint Vincent 2003.

b) 7...d6 8 0-0 ♕e7 (8...♘ge7 9 ♘d2 0-0 10 ♕h5 ♘e5 11 ♗e2 with an edge) 9 ♖e1 ♗d7 10 ♘f5! ♕f6 (on the other hand 10...♗xf5? merely allows 11 exf5 opening the e-file and threatening a discovered attack) 11 ♗xb6 axb6 12 ♘e3 ♘ge7 13 ♘d2 0-0 led to a level game in Ibrahim-Benen, Montreal 2002.

8 0-0 0-0



9 ♕h5

An aggressive-looking move designed to increase the pressure. It is easy to understand why Afek was happy to choose this line because Praet-Wantiez, Belgian Team Championship 2001, is an

indication that his opponent has a poor record with the line. That game went 9 ♘c2 ♔h8 10 ♗xb6 axb6 11 f4 d6 12 f5 ♘g8 (a nice idea to use the king's knight to undermine the e-pawn from the f6 square) 13 ♘d2 ♘f6 14 ♕e1 ♘e5 (White might have managed to shut out Black's light-squared bishop but now e5 is the perfect post for a knight) 15 ♕h4 ♗d7 16 ♖fe1 ♗c6 17 ♗b3 ♖e8 (maybe 17...♘d3!? is the critical test when 18 ♖e3 prompts an attack) 18 ♘d4 with a slight initiative and White eventually won but after 18...♘xb2 19 ♖h3 ♕e7 20 ♘e3 ♘d3 I prefer Black.

9...♘xd4

This gives White a decent pawn centre but the merit of the move is that it swaps off a potential attacking piece. Also possible is 9...d6 10 ♘d2 and now: 10...♘e5 11 ♗e2 f5 12 f4 (probably 12 ♘c4!? is worth exploring) 12...♘5c6 13 ♖ae1 with level chances, Rohler-Halser, Graz 2002.

b) 10...♘xd4 11 cxd4 ♗e6 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♕h3! (White jumps at the chance to target the relatively weak e-pawn) 13...♕c8 14 ♘f3 e5 15 ♕xc8 ♘xc8 16 ♖ac1 exd4 17 ♗xd4 c6 18 ♖cd1 ♖e8 19 ♖fe1 with the superior chances because the knight on c8 hampers Black's piece co-ordination yet is needed to defend the d6 pawn, Sukhov-Wantiez, Internet 2003.

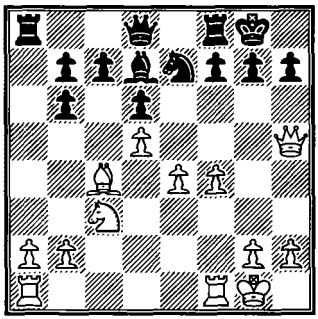
10 cxd4

Instead 10 ♗xd4 is a tame response because 10...♘c6 instantly rules out White's immediate attacking ambitions because the bishop on d4 can be exchanged. 11 ♖d1 ♕e7 12 e5 ♘xd4 13 cxd4 d5! (a clever equalising ruse) 14 ♗xd5 ♖d8 15 ♘c3 c6 16 ♗b3 ♗xd4 regaining the pawn with equal opportunities, Vujic-Somborski, Nis 1998.

10...d6 11 ♘c3 ♗e6 12 d5

12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♕h3 ♕c8 intending ...e6-e5 is equal.

12...♗d7 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 f4



14...b5?!

The Belgian is a decent player but here he shows an impatient streak by offering a pawn for active play. A better response is 14...♘g6 in the knowledge that 15 f5 allows 15...♘e5 and the knight occupies a strong outpost from which it cannot easily be ousted and from where it keeps an eye on White's attack. 16 f6 (16 ♗e2 is met by 16...f6 with equal opportunities but admittedly in practical terms it is easier for White to create an attack) 16...gxf6 (or 16...♘xc4? 17 ♕g5 g6 18 ♕h6 winning) 17 ♗e2 ♖e8 18 ♕h6 with an initiative.

15 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♘xb5 c6 17 ♘c3 ♕b6+ 18 ♖f2

Afek is now a pawn up and his rook on f2 protects the b2 pawn – which means that White is on top.

18...f5 19 dxc6 bxc6 20 ♖e1 fxe4 21 ♖xe4 ♘g6 22 g3

A necessary precaution because the rook on f2 is pinned so the threat of ...♘xf4 is eliminated.

22...d5 23 ♖e6 ♖a5 24 ♕e2

I like 24 f5 even though the threat to the knight is currently non-existent because fxg6 would just leave the rook on f2 unguarded. Now the threat is 25 b4 to force the queen to take the knight so that fxg6 is possible or if the queen's rook retreats then ♘xd5 is a winner.

24...d4 25 ♕c4 ♕c5 26 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 27 ♘e4

An ending is bound to be a joy for White thanks to his extra pawn. The game concluded:

27...♖c1+ 28 ♔g2 ♖d8 29 f5 ♘f8 30 ♖d6 ♖xd6 31 ♘xd6 ♘d7 32 ♔f3 c5 33 b3 ♘e5+ 34 ♔e4 ♖e1+ 35 ♔d5 d3 36 ♖d2 ♖e2 37 ♘e4 ♘d7 38 a4 c4 39 bxc4 ♘b6+ 40 ♔d4 ♘xc4 41 ♔xc4 ♖xe4+ 42 ♔b5 ♖e2 43 ♖xd3 ♖b2+ 44 ♔c4 ♖xh2 45 ♖a3 ♖h5 46 a5 ♖xf5 47 a6 ♖f8 48 a7 ♖a8 49 ♔d5 ♔f7 50 ♔c6 ♔f6 51 ♔b7 ♖e8 52 a8=♕ ♖xa8 53 ♖xa8 ♔f5 54 ♖a4 h5 55 ♔c6 1-0

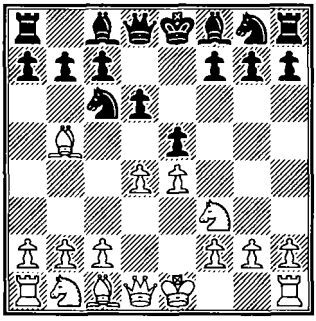
In my experience some players are reluctant to enter the Scotch and try to avoid it with the meek 3...d6.

Rublevsky – Ferrandi
Aiacciu Masters 2004

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 d6

It is worth mentioning here that 3...exd4 4 ♘xd4 d6 is possible. Now instead of having to learn a separate line I would suggest against that 5 ♗b5 which transposes to the main game.

4 ♗b5



I think this is the best way to continue because it increases the pressure on Black by pinning the knight and threatening to a win a pawn. It is easier to recommend knowing that Kasparov and other top players have adopted it and also because it transposes to an advantageous line of the Ruy Lopez usually arising from the move-order 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 d4 and in which Black tends to end up with a passive position. I have tried 4 dxe5 in the past but the ending is difficult to win despite the fact that Black cannot castle: 4...♘xe5 5 ♘xe5 dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7 ♗c4 ♔e8 8 ♘c3 ♗b4 9 ♗d2 ♘f6 10 f3 with equal chances, Lane-Corrigan, Brussels 2000.

4...♗d7

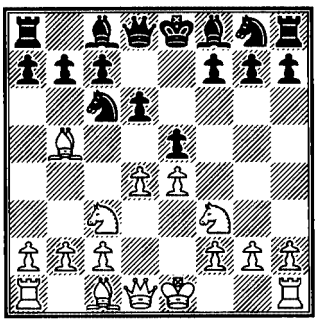
Black breaks the pin which is somewhat more sensible than the alternatives:

a) 4...a6? 5 ♗xc6+ bxc6 6 dxe5 ♗g4 7 exd6 cxd6 8 ♘c3 gives White a clear advantage thanks to the extra pawn, Kasparov-Abud, simul, Sao Paulo 2004.

b) 4...exd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗d7 6 ♘c3 transposes to the main game. Instead 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗c4!? ♘f6 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 0-0 is equal, R.Waters-J.Parker, Exmouth 2004.

c) Of course 4...♕d7?? allows 5 d5 winning.

5 ♘c3



5...exd4

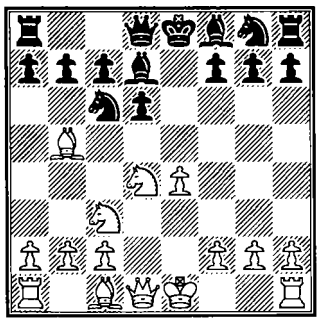
Black releases the tension in the centre because sooner or later it will be necessary since otherwise White will eventually be able to exchange on c6 and win the e5 pawn. The main alternative is 5...♘f6 6 0-0 (the urge to try and win a pawn 6 ♗xc6 is shown to be premature upon 6...♗xc6 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♘xe4 and Black is better) 6...♗e7 (or 6...exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗e7 8 ♗xc6 bxc6 9 ♗f4 0-0 10 ♕f3 ♘e8 11 ♖ad1 g6 12 e5 d5 13 ♘b3 with an edge, Bhat-Ganbold, San Francisco 2005) 7 ♖e1 exd4 8 ♘xd4 and now:

a) 8...♘e5 9 ♘f5 0-0 10 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11 ♗g5 c6 12 ♗f1 (maybe 12 f4 is worth exploring because 12...cxb5? allows White to have all the fun on 13 ♘d5 ♕d8 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♕f3 winning) 12...♖fe8 13 ♕d4 ♘eg4 14 h3 ♕e5 15 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♖ad1 led to the superior ending in Castella Garcia-Carmona Cruz, Lorca 2003.

b) 8...♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 0-0 10 ♗xd7 (10 ♗f4 intending ♖ad1 is another decent option) 10...♕xd7 11 b3 ♖fe8 12 ♗b2 ♗f8 13 ♖e3 with the aim of swinging the rook across to g3 or h3 for the attack gives White a slight edge, Istratescu-Klinova,Wijk aan Zee 2002.

6 ♘xd4

White has a comfortable space advantage and will be able to develop smoothly.

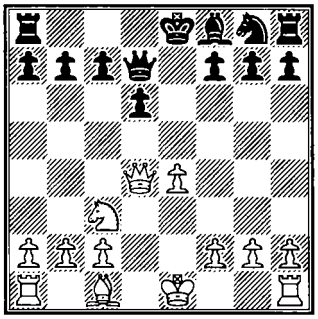


6...♘xd4

If 6...g6 then I would try 7 ♗e3 because it makes sense to employ a similar set-up to that used against 4...g6, so that White can save time and energy by not having to learn a completely new line. For instance: 7...♘f6 8 f3 ♗g7 9 ♕d2 0-0 10 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 11 0-0-0 (White is ready to create tactical chances by advancing the pawns on the kingside) 11...♖e8 12 ♗h6 ♗h8 13 ♗g5 ♕d7 14 g4 b5 15 ♕f4 gave White the better attacking chances, Zaitsev-Biriukov, Tula 2004.

Also possible is 6...♘f6 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 ♕d3 0-0 10 0-0-0 ♘g4 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♕g3 a5 13 ♘xc6! (White wins a pawn and ensures good play) 13...♕f6 (if 13...♗xc6 then 14 ♕xg4 is better for White) 14 f4 ♗xc6 15 ♕xg4 a4 16 a3 ♖ab8 17 ♖he1 with the superior chances, Jansa-Gruzmann, Arvier 2004.

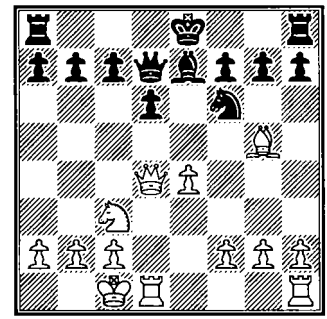
7 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 8 ♕xd4



8...♘f6

In the game Shirov-Sulskis, Tallinn 2004, Black tried 8...♘e7 against his top class opponent but White used his space advantage to secure an edge: 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♕e3 g6 11 ♘d5 ♗g7 12 ♕b3 0-0-0 (12...0-0? allows simply 13 ♕xb7 with advantage) 13 ♗g5 ♖df8 14 ♖ad1 f5 15 exf5 ♖xf5 16 ♗e3 ♖e8 17 c4 ♖e4 18 ♕d3 ♖g4 19 f4 ♖f8 20 ♖fe1 ♕f5 21 ♕d2 ♖h4 22 b4! threatening b4-b5 followed by ♘e7+ with good chances.

9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 0-0-0



The most aggressive continuation which indicates a preference for a kingside attack and creates the option of e4-e5.

10...0-0

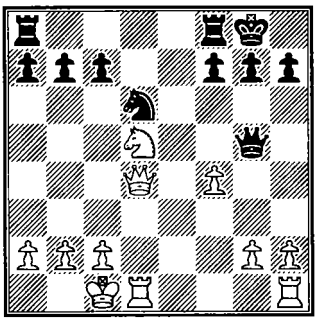
Maybe 10...c5 has the merit of knocking the queen off its central perch but the drawback is that it leaves Black with a weak, backward d-pawn: 11 ♕d2 0-0 12 e5! ♘e8 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 exd6 ♕d7 15 ♕d5 and the extra pawn secures the advantage, Cabanes-Aggoune, French Team Championship 2004. Instead 10...♕g4 should be met by 11 ♗e3! which I think this is the best ploy – to give up a pawn in return for an initiative: 11...♕xg2 12 ♖hg1 ♕xh2 13 ♖xg7 ♖g8 (or 13...♔f8 14 ♖dg1 intending ♕c4 with the brighter prospects)

14 ♖xg8+ ♘xg8 15 ♕g7 gave White the advantage in Hankel-Schuler, Baunatal 1996.

11 e5 ♘e8 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 exd6 ♘xd6

Maybe 13...cxd6 is necessary but it presents the influential d5 square to the white knight and the isolated d-pawn is also a long-term problem: 14 ♘d5 ♕g5+ 15 ♔b1 ♕xg2? 16 ♖hg1 ♕f3 17 ♘c7! wins. Or 13...♕xd6 14 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 15 ♘d5! ♘e4 (15...c6? 16 ♘e7+ ♔h8 17 ♖xd6 wins) 16 ♖d4! f5 (or 16...♘xf2 when 17 ♖f1 traps the knight) 17 f3 ♘f6 18 ♘xc7 when the extra material results in a favourable ending.

14 ♘d5 ♕g5+ 15 f4



15...♕g6??

Well, anybody can make a mistake when playing a 2649 rated grandmaster! The choice for a long-term encounter is 15...♕d8 when 16 ♕c5 ♖c8 17 ♖he1 ♔h8 18 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 19 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 20 ♖xd6 ensures a winning ending.

16 ♘e7+ 1-0

Conclusion

The various replies to the Scotch given in this chapter are not that testing for White who is usually granted at least a space advantage.

Zapata – Alvarez looks at 4...♘xd4 which has a poor reputation but it is played often enough for White to have to take it seriously. White's decision to avoid the ending works well but an exchange of queens does present an initiative which is examined in some detail. In the game **Jonkman – Upton**, Black gives 4...♘ge7 a go but this is hardly threatening for White. After creating a slight edge Jonkman uses his space advantage to find a way to win material and Black remains second best throughout the game. Perhaps 4...g6 is not particularly obscure so long as White goes for an aggressive set-up and transposes to a sharp system of the Pirc as in **Zakharstov – Kagirov**. The clash of grandmasters in **Ehlvest – Christiansen** sees the popular 4...♗b4+ and after 5 c3 then 5...♗e7 is the move of choice. It involves White manoeuvring carefully to gain an edge which translates into a superior ending. **Afek – Wantiez** sees a different response with 5...♗c5, upon which White replies 6 ♗e3 in an effort to wrest an advantage from the opening. **Rublevsky – Ferrandi** is not strictly a Scotch but I have seen 3...d6 so often that I know it had to be dealt with properly. I think 4 ♗b5 is the right answer and the position is straightforward enough for White to handle as he is granted a space advantage from the opening.

Index of Variations

Mieses Variation: 8...♘b6 *10*

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♘d5 *10*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♘c3 ♕e6 10 ♕e4 ♗a6 *11*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♘b6 9 ♘c3 ♕e6 10 ♕e4 g6 *14*
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9 ♘d2 g6 *31*
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1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4
6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♗g5 c6
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11 ♘e2 *50*
11 ♘a4 *53*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♗g5 ♗e6 11 ♕f3 *56*
11 ♘e2 *58*
11 ♘b5 *61*

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1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6
6 ♕d2 bxc6 *66*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6
6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗d4 *70*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6
6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗e6 8 ♘a4 ...♗d6/...♗e7 *73*
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♘xc6 ♕f6
6 ♕d2 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗e6 8 ♘a4 ♖d8 9 ♗d3 ♗d4 10 0-0
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1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4
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1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4
♘e5 8 ♗e2
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1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗c5 5 ♗e3 ♕f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4
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